THE SELF-LIMITATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

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THE SELF-LIMITATION

OF THE

WORD OF GOD

By FORBES ROBINSON,

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THE SELF-LIMITATION

OF THE

WORD OF GOD

AS MANIFESTED IN THE INCARNATION

AND AN ESSAY ON

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF O.T. PROPHECY

BY

FORBES ROBINSON

LATE FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY

CHARLES H. ROBINSON

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE writer of the two essays which are included in this volume is known to many in England and America as the author of a volume entitled "Letters to his friends," the demand for which, although it has not been published in England, has been so great that 20,000 copies have already been issued. Apart from a work on the Coptic apocryphal gospels, the only writings which he himself had printed were the two essays which are here reproduced. These were issued for private circulation but were never published, as their writer contemplated the possibility of elaborating at greater length the arguments which they contain. Readers of his "Letters" who have had an opportunity of reading these essays have repeatedly urged that they should be published on the ground that their treatment of the difficult problems with which

they deal is calculated to appeal to thoughtful persons whose minds have been unsettled by some of the teachings of "modernism".

In view of the fact that the author had not himself published them I have for a long time hesitated to accede to this request, but the testimonies to the help which they have afforded to those who have read them have appeared to me to create an obligation to offer them to a wider circle of readers.

The two essays won the Burney and the Hulsean University prizes at Cambridge. The subject set for the Burney prize was "The authority of our Lord in its bearing upon the interpretation of the Old Testament". After the prize had been adjudged the title of the essay was altered by the writer to "The self-limitation of the Word of God as manifested in the Incarnation".

Those who are familiar with Forbes Robinson's "Letters to his friends" will not need to be reminded that a belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ was at once the foundation and the coping-stone of his faith, and that the doctrine of the Trinity, so far from rendering the Christian creed mysterious or difficult of acceptance, appeared to him to afford an

explanation of some of the most difficult problems that are raised by human experience. The spirit of adoring reverence in which Forbes Robinson approached the central problem with which this essay deals may be illustrated by his own words. He writes, "If we could be certain that our Lord had once and for all settled certain questions, our efforts would be directed not at determining whether His decision was correct—the very thought of that would be impious—but at the investigation of facts which might conclusively establish to others the positions which we upon His authority had already accepted as true. That is to say, Old Testament criticism would in no small degree . . . consist of attempts to prove to the intellect the positions laid down by the infallible Master."

Dr. James, who was headmaster of Rossall and afterwards of Rugby school, writing to the editor of this volume says: "The essay is a singularly lucid statement and attempted solution of a most difficult theological problem, in which all who believe in the deity of Christ must be deeply interested, and I can bear personal testimony to its helpfulness".

The title of the Hulsean Essay was "The

evidential value of Old Testament prophecy". In it the writer endeavours to show that the evidential value of the Old Testament prophets and in particular of the passages in their writings which have generally been interpreted as containing a Messianic reference is in no degree weakened by the results of Old Testament criticism which have been established or are likely to be established in the future.

The writer of this essay believed that not only was the evidential value of the Old Testament prophecies increased as the result of recent criticism, but that interpreted in the light of modern knowledge the Old Testament as a whole has a special message for the world to-day. In one of his sermons which has been published he says :—

"Conditions of life have changed. Its problems have become more complicated. It is not easy to see God's working in the events of our own time. As we take up our daily papers, and read the history of our own times, we know that He must still be moving and working—but it is difficult to say how and where. It is then a comfort to be able to turn to a simpler stage of society, and to

read of God's dealings with the children of men at the dawn of history. It is a comfort to read of a time when men heard the voice of God and saw their duty clearer than some of us can see it now. It is well to study such a period of history—to study it with real care—to master it thoroughly, because if we can understand God's purposes then we shall understand them better now. All history is of a piece. For all history is a manifestation of the mind and purpose of God. He who masters one period of history and knows the interpretation thereof, and who can see God in it, has gone far towards mastering all history.

"If then you would learn how God is educating and training the nation to which you belong, read how in old time He educated the Hebrew nation. If you would understand the history of your own time, read the Old Testament. There you will find a simple history interpreted and explained. There you will gain, as you can gain nowhere else, a belief that God is indeed educating the race—that His education extends from generation to generation—that His kindly care is over each generation in turn—that each has a special work

to learn, which no one else can learn. And the more you believe in God's education of the race, the more you will believe in His education of yourself, the more clearly will you realize that you too are under a Divine Educator, that you are in a great school, that you have lessons to learn which no one else can learn, that the lessons though they come in unexpected ways—in many portions and in many manners—are all set you by the same Teacher."

These essays are published in the hope that they may help towards a solution of some of the problems which are being raised by the study of the Old Testament and towards a better understanding of the message which it has for the world to-day.

C. H. R.

The translations of the passages quoted from the O.T. were made direct from the original by the writer of the Essays.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE never probably was a time when the Old Testament was studied with such peculiar interest as it is studied to-day. Christians have indeed always regarded it with reverence, because in it they have seen the story of the preparation of the world for the final revelation of its Lord and Saviour. But of late years the study of language and of history has greatly advanced, and the problems suggested by the Old Testament are seen to be wider in range and more difficult to solve than was formerly supposed. Our age is asking questions which scarcely suggested themselves to earlier students. To many of them the Old Testament was a single book in numerous volumes, each of which was written by a different hand. To us it is rather the remains of the literature of a people. What is this literature? How did it come to assume its final shape? To what degree can we depend upon the traditional accounts of its origin? Can we trust the statements of the books themselves regarding their authorship? Do any of them contain collections of traditions and

myths, or are all throughout a record of historical facts?

Such are the questions which men are now asking, and not a few thoughtful scholars are attempting to answer them. They are applying to Jewish literature the same methods of historical and literary criticism, that they would apply to the literature of any other nation; and the results of their work have already been of the deepest interest. But a difficulty has arisen in many minds. How far are we justified in treating the Old Testament in this way? Can we approach the question of the authenticity and genuineness of the books as an open one? We have been taught to regard the Old Testament as different to other literature, as written and compiled by inspired men. Such men could not have made mistakes, neither could they have purposely written and handed down mere myths or traditions, much less could they have made or perpetuated actual forgeries.

Hence many at the present day have thought it wisest not to accept the results of modern scientific criticism, unless such results agree with their theory of the nature and extent of inspiration. They are sure that the time will come when sound criticism will show that their theory was right, and that fresh evidence will but tend to prove that their own standpoint was alone tenable. Meanwhile

they are content to wait. Such a position might in some respects be satisfactory, if there was one universal standard of inspiration, "quod semper, ubique et ab omnibus creditum est". But as a matter of fact we do not find that this is the case. "Quot homines, tot sententiae." Comparatively few men have exactly the same theory of inspiration. If each man then refuses to accept results, because they do not harmonize with his theory, the criticism of the Old Testament must progress but slowly and unsatisfactorily.

The truth is that the precise nature and extent of Inspiration are best learnt from a reverent and critical study of the books which we believe to be inspired. We cannot, in approaching the study of any book, entirely lay aside our preconceived theories; but we can constantly correct such theories by a consideration of the facts which the book itself contains. Theories must ultimately be made to agree with facts, not facts with theories. The whole problem of the meaning and extent of inspiration cannot yet be completely solved, because we have not before us the data necessary for a final solution. As fresh discoveries are made and as old facts are seen in a new light, our knowledge of inspiration grows ever wider and more accurate. Meanwhile we must be careful how we regard any question of authenticity or of genuineness as settled,

because we consider a book to be inspired. The fact that we have such a belief should rather be a motive for further and more scholarly criticism of the book, that we may thereby discover how far our belief is justified, and what inspiration in any particular case may mean.

But this is not the only difficulty which arises in the acceptation of the results of the new criticism of the Old Testament. There is another one still more profound. It is this. The Old Testament was used by our Lord. He did not use it incidentally or occasionally. He used it again and again. He regarded His whole life and work as the fulfilment of its teaching and prophecies. He refers to events recorded in it. He quotes it and assigns the quotations to particular writers. He argues from it. He uses it as the groundwork of His teaching and as the text of His sermons. He treats it as an authoritative revelation of the Divine purposes. He speaks of events it records as of historical facts. The question then arises: what is the precise significance of our Lord's treatment of the Old Testament? How far must one who owns our Lord as his supreme Teacher and Master regard the problem of the authenticity of books which He quoted by name as settled once and for all? If our Lord speaks of Moses or David as the author of certain writings, are we at liberty to assign those writings

on grounds of internal evidence to any other person save Moses or David? If He uses the book of Deuteronomy to illustrate profound spiritual lessons, are we justified in entertaining for a moment the possibility of forgery in connexion with it? If He finds in the stories of the Flood or the life of Jonah lessons for all time, can we resolve them into myths or allegories? Must not a Christian refuse to credit some of the results of one school of modern criticism, not because the arguments supporting those results appear to him in themselves to be inconclusive, but because he believes that One wiser than the wisest of critics has given to mankind an authoritative and infallible decision on the question? This is no imaginary difficulty. It is one which vitally affects Christian scholarship. For if we could be certain that our Lord had once and for all settled certain questions, our efforts would be directed not at determining whether His decision was correct—the very thought of that would be impious—but at the investigation of facts which might conclusively establish to others the positions which we upon His authority had already accepted as true. That is to say, Old Testament criticism would in no small degree take an apologetic form, and would consist of attempts to prove to the intellect the positions laid down by the infallible Master. In fact this is precisely the point of view

of a considerable number of writers at the present time. Starting with those of our Lord's statements which bear upon the Old Testament, they have spent their efforts in attempting to overthrow the critical positions of a school, which to their mind has arrived at results that a Christian as such is obliged to reject. To such men the truth of Christianity itself is concerned in the overthrow of the statements of their opponents.

It is our duty then to investigate very carefully the character of our Lord's teaching on the Old Testament. We must see precisely what He said and what He left unsaid, and we must note each allusion to those books whose historical value has been questioned or whose authority has been denied. This has been done in part, but the results are not entirely satisfactory. For our Lord's statements are found to admit of more than one interpretation. To one student the mention of a certain Psalm as Davidic is a conclusive proof of its date and origin. To another it betokens a gracious condescension to the views of that particular time by One Who was content to argue with men on their own premises. To a third it is proof of the possibility of error in One Who refused to make use of that Divine omniscience which of right belonged to Him. Such divergent results teach us that the nature of our Lord's authority cannot be decided by a simple

appeal to His actual words, because the significance of those words necessarily depends upon the view which we have already taken of His Personality.

We must go behind the words to Him Who spoke them. We must ask not simply what the words mean, but what they mean as coming from Him.

When we study the picture of our Lord's life as it is presented to us in the Gospel, we find that it is at once the portrait of a divine and of a human life. It is a divine life. He Himself claimed to be the Son of God. Each Gospel is written from a different standpoint, but all four Evangelists agree in portraying the central Figure as more than human. It is a mistake to suppose that the divinity of our Lord can only be inferred from the fourth Gospel. The fourth Gospel clearly states the fact, but the first three Gospels are unintelligible unless the fact be assumed. Thus St. Luke represents the real question at issue, when Jesus Christ was condemned to death, to be His claim not only to Messiahship but also to Divine Sonship.[1] Had He been willing to renounce the claim, He might perhaps have been released. When He refused to abandon it, He was at once condemned by the council of His nation. "And they all said, Art thou then the Son of God?

[1] St. Luke XXII. 67-71. Cf. St. Matt. XXVI. 63-66; St. Mark XIV. 61-64.

and He said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What further need have we of witness? for we ourselves have heard from his own mouth."[1] When modern writers assert that the phrase "Son of God" was used by our Lord in an ethical rather than a metaphysical or ontological sense, we do well to remember that Christ's actual hearers interpreted it in a very different manner. They recognized in these and similar words not only a vague claim to a kind of divinity, but also an assertion of entire equality and unity with God Himself. Thus in St. John's Gospel we read that when our Lord claimed to be one with the Father, the Jews took up stones to stone Him. And why? "Because," said they, "that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."[2] They attempted to murder Him then and they ultimately succeeded in putting Him to death because He claimed to be more than human. Modern critics may hold that they were wrong in their interpretation of Christ's words. But it is reasonable to suppose that if our Lord had used the words in a sense different from that in which they understood them, He would have explained the significance of His claim and would not have died on account of a verbal misunderstanding.

The Christ of the Gospel is divine. He is human as well. For not only did He claim to be

[1] St. Luke XXII. 70, 71. [2] St. John X. 33.

the Son of God ; He also claimed to be the Son of Man. And as we read the Gospel History, we feel that we are reading the story of a human life. His faculties are subject to the law of human development : He increases in wisdom and bodily stature.[1] He asks for information.[2] He expresses surprise.[3] He prays.[4] He knows the meaning of human sorrow and of human love.[5] He is tired.[6] He is conscious of the loss of power.[7] He dies.[8] In life and in death He is man. The fourth Gospel whilst most clearly maintaining His divinity no less surely lays stress on His humanity. It tells us of the depth of His affection,[9] and of His grief and indignation at the sight of death.[10] It tells us how He was human to the close of His life, how upon the Cross one of His dying utterances was the confession of a physical need, "I thirst".[11] After His resurrection He is still man. He still has a body which retains the marks of former sufferings.[12] He is mistaken for an ordinary stranger by Mary Magdalene and by two of His followers. His identity is revealed not by the exercise of superhuman powers, but by the tone of His voice and by the

[1] St. Luke II. 52.
[2] St. John XI. 34.
[3] St. Mark VII. 18.
[4] St. Luke III. 21.
[5] St. Matt. XXVI. 38 ; St. Mark X. 21.
[6] St. John IV. 6.
[7] St. Mark V. 30.
[8] St. Matt. XXVII. 50.
[9] St. John XI. 5 ; XIII. 23.
[10] *Ibid.*, 33, 35, 38.
[11] St. John XIX. 28.
[12] St. John XX. 27.

manner in which He took bread and blessed it.[1] And when His disciples are uncertain as to whether He is but a phantom and no real man, He bids them behold His hands and His feet, "and while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish. And he took it and did eat before them."[2]

The only adequate explanation of the words and life of Jesus Christ is that of the Creed, that He was at once perfect God and perfect Man. It is therefore useless to attempt to understand the significance of His Personality, unless in part at least we realize the meaning of Godhead and of Manhood. In the Person of Christ the natural and the supernatural, the finite and the infinite, the earthly and the heavenly are in some manner united. But how are they united? Can we form any conception of the relation of the divine and the human in such a life? Nay, is such a union really possible? Does it not imply a limitation of the Absolute, which is a philosophical impossibility? Does it not involve a union of sinless Deity with that which is essentially imperfect and sinful?

Such questions as these are almost necessarily suggested to the thoughtful student, when he con-

[1] St. John XX. 15 f.; St. Luke XXIV. 18, 30, 31.

[2] St. Luke XXIV. 39, 41-43.

templates the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. They must be carefully considered by anyone who attempts to solve the problem of the extent of our Lord's knowledge in His life upon earth, and the nature of His authority in matters of historical and Biblical criticism.

In the following pages I have attempted to give in outline some suggestions as to the solution of these questions. The reason that I have begun by examining at some length the Christian doctrine of the Personality of God and the possibility of His Self-Limitation and Revelation is because I did not wish to use terms like personality, revelation or self-limitation without inquiring into their true significance. Throughout the following chapters I have endeavoured to investigate the meaning of terms which I have employed. I have asked myself what I really meant when I ascribed omnipotence and omniscience to the Supreme Being, because I have found myself and others applying these terms without accurately thinking how much they involved. And if I have even now failed to grasp their true significance, may He who taught me to think upon His nature and attributes forgive me the imperfections and narrowness of my thought.

CHAPTER I.

THE POSSIBILITY OF SELF-LIMITATION.

The Christian doctrine of the Personality of God has been attacked on two different grounds. The first ground is that of its inherent impossibility. Personality, it is said, involves limitation, and we cannot conceive of the Absolute as limited. To speak of a limited Absolute is a contradiction in terms. Hence Pantheism opposes to this doctrine of the Personality of God the idea of a universal Spirit Who, though Himself unconscious, yet attains to varying degrees of consciousness in nature and in man. Such a Spirit instead of being independent of the world depends upon it for His very existence. He sleeps in the plant, dreams in the animal, and only awakes to full intellectual and moral consciousness in the man. He would never in all probability have been conscious of His own being or of the world which He had produced but for the existence of man. In man He remembers what He fashioned in His sleep and in His dreams.

If the Pantheistic explanation of the facts of con-

sciousness and of the existence of the world were satisfactory, we might be able to accept it as a substitute for the Christian belief in the Personality of the Supreme Being. But until it can be shown how a blind instinctive force can work both in nature and in history to intelligent ends, the effect produced must be held to be greater than the cause which is postulated. Therefore on intellectual grounds alone Pantheism can scarcely be considered satisfactory.[1] Neither is Pantheism able to account for the deliverances of our moral consciousness. The unconditional "ought" of the moral law is at once explained upon the assumption of the existence of a Lawgiver distinct from and superior to man. But Pantheism allows that such a moral Being exists only in so far as He is created by man himself. Is it possible to conceive how a duty could be owed to such a self-made Being, how He should be capable of issuing absolute and unconditional commands, which man in his inmost being feels himself bound to obey?

But is the objection which gives rise to Pantheism an insuperable one? Are the notions of "personal" and "absolute" self-contradictory? Does the former imply that the Supreme Being is limited and the latter that He is unlimited? The Christian doctrine of the Trinity seems to throw a light upon

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sect. 41.

this question. It is true that man only arrives at a conception of his own personality, of the existence of an "I," when he discovers that he is different from the world by which he is bounded. Besides his "Ego" there is a "non-Ego," which limits him and forces upon him the fact of his own identity. But in the case of the Supreme Being, Christianity tells us that though a Person, He is not dependent upon a created world outside and independent of Himself in order to make such a discovery. In His own Being there is that which takes the place of the "non-Ego". God is able to say to Himself "I," because within Himself there is eternally a "Thou". The "I" and "Thou" are not only distinguished but united, because in each act of self-consciousness there is a Third Person Who is neither "I" nor "Thou". The ground and source of Deity is God the Father; but, if we may dare to say so, His consciousness of His own identity depends upon the fact that He is also conscious of the existence within the Godhead of One whose being is derived from Himself, of God the Son: and the mutual consciousness of Father and Son in like manner seems to depend upon the fact that they are conscious of a Third Person Who proceeds from them both, of God the Holy Spirit. Thus God is indeed a Person, but He is not dependent on limitations, like those which the world imposes upon us, to become aware of that fact. He

has no need to go outside of Himself. He Himself eternally makes His own object.[1]

Viewed in this light we need not regard the ideas of "Personal" and "Absolute" any longer as contradictory. God can be and is a Person independently of the world. He is absolute and unlimited, because He finds within His own being that "non-Ego," which we are obliged to go outside of ourselves to find.

But the Pantheist may answer: granted that it is possible to conceive of God as Personal if there were no created world, is it equally possible to conceive of Him as such in the present condition of existence? There is around us a world of nature and man, which you affirm to have been created by God. In that case you must admit that we have on the one side a Personal God and on the other a world which is not part of Himself. That is to say, we have on the one hand an absolute and unlimited Being, and on the other a world which limits His absolute power. Nor are these limits imaginary or evanescent. They consist not only of the natural world which is outside of Himself, but also of persons whose wills are constantly in direct opposition to His. Is not His will therefore bounded by that which He has created? If He is

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sects. 55, 56.

a Person, does He not cease to be absolute by the act of creation?

Now as we have already seen that God can exist as a Personal Being independently of all creation, any limits which are imposed upon Him by the act of creation are not a necessary condition of His existence. Such limits are made of His own free will and are of the nature of a voluntary self-limitation. And the real question at issue is this: is it inconsistent with our idea of an absolute and unlimited Being that He should be able to place limits upon Himself by bringing into existence other wills which are also capable of acting freely? So far from being inconsistent, does it not seem that God would not be unlimited or absolute in the fullest sense of the terms, unless He were able to do so? For the true conception of an absolute Being is that of One who has absolute control over Himself; and He would not have absolute control over Himself, unless He were able to limit Himself. An absolute Being can never be compelled to do anything against His will and can never do anything that is self-contradictory. But self-limitation is not due to pressure from without, nor is it the same as self-contradiction: it is rather an indication of the free exercise of perfect power. Theism does not assert that the Absolute, in creating beings who have will power of their own, has ever completely

given over His power to them. Each moment it is of God's own free will that other wills exist. Each moment the limitation is due not to any metaphysical necessity of His Being, but to a deliberate act of choice. At no particular point of time need we suppose that the Absolute decreed that He would henceforth limit Himself and refuse for ever to exercise certain of His powers. The existence of creation at any given time is the result of the exercise of self-limitation at that time. And when the question is asked: what guarantee then have we that this act of self-limitation may not at any time cease? Theism replies: our one guarantee lies in the unchangeable nature of the moral and rational Being who thus limits Himself. His free will is not a mere impulsive movement, but is dictated by perfect wisdom and perfect goodness.

The second objection to the belief in the Personality of God is not that the doctrine is in itself impossible, but that it is one that can neither be affirmed nor denied by man, because he has not faculties capable of knowing God. How can the finite apprehend the infinite? If man affirms that the Absolute is personal, his statements must be regarded as the expression of his own subjective needs, not as the knowledge of an objective reality in the life of God. This is the Agnostic position. The word "Agnosticism" is a new one: but the

position is the development of an old tendency—known by the name of Nominalism—to represent all general conceptions as inventions of the human mind, as mere names without any corresponding realities. This tendency is seen not only in professed Agnostics, but also in a less fully developed form amongst some Christian writers. When the existence of a Personal God has been admitted, it has still been maintained that any notions which man may form of the character of such a Being are at best anthropomorphic ideas of One who in His inner life is entirely unlike what we conceive Him to be. It has even been urged that though finite human beings must speak of the Absolute as good and pure and just, yet they must remember that they cannot presume to say what those terms as applied to Him may mean. Such a line of argument is, however, opposed to any true idea of Revelation. Revelation starts with the assumption that God and man have somewhat in common, that they stand in a real relation to one another, and that man is in some true sense capable of apprehending his Maker.

Is then the assumption underlying Revelation justifiable? or is man so constituted that he cannot know God? Probably we may say that a revelation of the Absolute *as* Absolute is impossible, because the Absolute who could be comprehended in

all His relations by finite beings would cease to be Absolute. But does Christianity maintain that man can know God as Absolute? Does it not rather teach us that the full extent of the eternal possibilities of the Divine Being must ever remain unknown to us? Man's knowledge, as far as it goes, is substantially true. When he apprehends his Maker as a righteous Being, he knows Him as He actually is. But, if we interpret the revelation of Christianity aright, the inner life of Deity can never be completely apprehended by any faculties which we possess, for we only know God in certain relations; and other relations must for ever remain an impenetrable mystery. And yet, though a knowledge of the Absolute as Absolute may be impossible, we cannot therefore affirm that no knowledge of God is attainable by man. Man may know what God's nature is without knowing that nature in an absolute degree. For the term "Absolute" does not describe the essence of Deity, but rather the mode in which that essence is present. Thus when Christianity teaches that the essence of God is Love, it is conceivable that any individual man may attain to a substantially correct knowledge of what that essence is, although he can only understand in part what is actually present in an infinite degree. It rests with Agnosticism to prove that a quality when raised to an infinite degree becomes

something different in essence to that which it was before. Though we cannot consider the position of Agnosticism as the only one that is philosophically tenable, and though we see no reason to give up our belief that man has moral and intellectual faculties by which he can attain to a knowledge of Him in whose image he is made, yet we cannot but recognize that such a position is in some measure a necessary reaction from another and almost equally dangerous extreme. Agnosticism is a reaction against Gnosticism. Some Gnostic Christians appear to think that God is comprehensible by man in all His relations. In that case man may have a complete intellectual apprehension of his Maker, and there is no mysterious inner life of Deity which finite beings can never penetrate. Such a doctrine is opposed to the whole spirit of Revelation, which whilst it bids men "seek" and "call upon" the Lord, yet states that "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." [1] Man only knows God in so far as God has vouchsafed to manifest Himself to him under conditions of space and time: he does not understand that side of the Divine life which remains unrevealed.

[1] Isaiah LV. 6, 8, 9.

If it be said: "Unless we have a complete intellectual intuition of God, how can we be certain that the inner life of God, in so far as it remains unrevealed, corresponds to that which has been revealed? How can we rely upon such a revelation as we have? If we knew more, if we saw the Godhead from the eternal standpoint, this revelation might appear so inadequate, as to be actually misleading." We reply: "Our assurance that this revelation—adapted as it is to our finite capacities—does express a substantial truth, is grounded upon our belief that the God in Whose image we are made is a rational and moral Being. As such He cannot deny Himself. Therefore His inner Life which we cannot apprehend does not contradict the Life which He has taught us in part to apprehend. From the eternal standpoint such an act as the Incarnation or such a doctrine as that of the Trinity may assume an aspect very different to that in which they appear to us. An action can scarcely be conceived of save under conditions of space and time: distinctions of number may not exist at all in a timeless world. Yet we may affirm with confidence that the Incarnation does denote some reality in the inner life of Deity, and that the doctrine of the Trinity does answer to a profound truth in the Being of God. And not only so, but we believe that though we are unable to understand God from the

point of view of the eternal world, yet each revelation that is given to us not only corresponds to a reality in His life, but also is the best and truest revelation of such a reality that is possible for us. We need not therefore fear to confess that from the eternal standpoint God's life is perhaps in many respects unlike what it appears to be from our standpoint, because we know that in all essential respects our revelation is correct and is that which most clearly represents objective realities to human beings."

We conclude then that in spite of the objections of Pantheism and Agnosticism the Christian doctrine of a personal and self-limiting God Who reveals Himself to man is not a philosophical impossibility.

CHAPTER II.

THE SELF-LIMITATION INVOLVED IN CREATION.

God has revealed Himself to men as One Who is independent of temporal and spatial conditions and to Whose knowledge and power there are no necessary limitations. In short, God is on the one hand Eternal and Omnipresent and on the other Omniscient and Omnipotent. As these attributes of the Divine Nature are constantly applied to the Son of God, and arguments with regard to His human and divine consciousness are founded upon their use, it becomes necessary to ask what precisely we mean when we apply these attributes to the God of Creation and Revelation, and whether by the act of creation He limits Himself in their exercise. What then do we mean when we affirm that the God of creation is omnipotent? Clearly we do not mean that He is able to do absolutely anything. He is not able to force man's will in whatsoever way He chooses; for man's will would not be free, if it was determined by any force from without. As long as God allows the existence of created wills which have power to act freely, so long does He place

limits upon His own omnipotence. If this be so, in what sense is the God of creation omnipotent? In this sense, that though He cannot compel a man to will what He wills, yet He can so control and direct the actions of any individual, as to prevent him from hindering the realization of His purposes for the race. But He is also omnipotent in a deeper sense. For not only does His power control the outward actions of a man and make them, whether he will or no, ultimately subserve His own purposes; but it also asserts itself within the domain of the will in another and what must eventually prove a still more effective manner. Though He cannot force the will, He *appeals* to it—appeals with the authority of perfect goodness and wisdom. And Revelation suggests the hope that such an appeal may ultimately prove omnipotent.

The Divine omnipotence is therefore limited by the fact of the existence of created wills. So also we believe is the Divine omniscience. For if we cannot conceive of God as being able to force a man's will, it is difficult to see how we can assert that He knows beforehand the result of every appeal that He makes to that will. If man has freedom to will or not to will to do a certain action, must we not regard the Supreme Being as able indeed in each case to know beforehand all the possibilities of the future, but not able to say which of the possi-

bilities will be actually realized? Revelation—we believe—gives us to understand that the ultimate goal of the development of our race and also the necessary means for attaining that goal—the Incarnation of the Son of God—were known absolutely and unconditionally beforehand. They were possibilities which must be realized. But does it suggest that the fall and its consequences were known in a similar unconditional manner? Were they not rather of the nature of possibilities, which need never have been realized? It rested with man to decide whether sin should remain to him a mere possibility or be made an actuality. God, we conceive, foresaw what the results would be if man chose to sin or chose not to sin; but we do not suppose that He knew which course of action man would pursue until he actually made his choice.[1] Otherwise must not our idea of God almost necessarily be that of a Being Who simply watches a world, the course of which He has planned beforehand? And does not our conception of man's life become fatalistic? We are inclined then to believe that the true doctrine of Divine omniscience is that God knows all possibilities. Some of these possibilities are eternally foreseen as certain to be realized. Others, if we are not mistaken, may or may not

[1] This conception of omniscience was suggested to me by Bishop Martensen's "Christian Dogmatics" (see sects. 87, 88, 116).

become actualities, and are only known beforehand as possibilities.

If it be objected that the very word foreknowledge, which is applied in Scripture to God,[1] has no meaning, because He is unconditioned by time, our reply is that such an objection seems to rest on an inadequate view of the significance of revelation. If God is revealed to us under spatial and temporal limitations, such a revelation cannot be purely illusive, but must answer to some objective reality in the life of God. Space and time therefore have a meaning for God as well as for man.

We have spoken of the omnipotence and omniscience of God; we have now to ask what the attributes omnipresent and eternal may mean. The doctrine of the omnipresence of God is sometimes taken to mean that He extends through all space and cannot be contained save in infinite space. But such phraseology as this is misleading: for though it is true that no portion of space is without God, yet on the one hand it is impossible to form any clear conception of infinite space as existing, and, on the other hand, even if we could form such a conception, we could not imagine God being contained in it. God is spirit,[2] and spirit cannot be extended through or

[1] Acts II. 23; 1 Peter I. 2. Cf. Rom. VIII. 29; XI. 2; 1 Peter I. 20.

[2] St. John IV. 24.

contained in space. The true idea of omnipresence is that God, though not confined by space, yet manifests Himself everywhere. There is no portion of space where God is not present. But just as we have seen that God's omnipotence and omniscience are limited by the creation of voluntary agents, so also is His omnipresence. Owing to the fact that man is free, He is not present in all men to an equal extent. In no man is God entirely absent; for He is in those whose wills are in direct antagonism to His own. If He were not, they would not be capable of willing at all. Their will power, which they use against Him, is at the same time derived from Him. But we cannot say that God is present in the full extent of His goodness and love. True the sinful man is an involuntary witness to the forbearance and patience of God, Who grants him the exercise of that will power which he persists in abusing; but would anyone maintain that the Divine essence is present in the same degree as it is in a good man, who allows himself to become an instrument in the Hands of his Maker? Thus God's omnipresence is limited by the existence of the rational creation. There is no person indeed in whom He is absent; but there are those in whom the attributes of His love and purity are as yet only very incompletely realized, though we are taught to believe that

the day will come when God will be "all in all".[1]

God is eternal. This word has sometimes been misunderstood in a similar manner to the word "omnipresent," and has been taken to mean that God extends through all time and is not contained save in infinite time. But in this case also such phraseology is misleading, and similar objections hold good. We can form no conception of infinite time, and even if we could, God would not be fully contained in or limited by it. Rather God is to be thought of as unconditioned by time and yet manifesting Himself in time. In all time God is present. But even as we showed in the case of space, the creation of rational beings imposes limits upon God. He is not present in all time with the same fulness of His Being. He is more clearly manifested at one time than another in the life of the individual or in the life of the race. At no time does He cease to be perfect Wisdom and Goodness, but at one time that Wisdom and Goodness cannot be fully realized in the free agents whom He has created, because they refuse to submit their wills to His will. God in the plenitude of His being is most clearly present when the creature's will is made the vehicle of His righteous purposes.

Man therefore must think of God's life as having

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

a twofold aspect. There is an inner life in His own Being, and an outer life in His relations to creation. This outer life is a life of self-limitation. And as we believe that the outer life is a true though imperfect reflection of the inner, we must conceive of that inner life as being in some away affected by the self-limitation of the outer. That is to say, we must believe that self-limitation is manifested in the very essence of Deity. If we go further and ask the reason for such limitation, possibly we shall find it in the revelation of Christianity that God *is* love.[1] Human love involves constant self-sacrifice and self-limitation. May not divine love involve the same? Nay, is it unreasonable to suppose that the higher the manifestation of love, the greater would be the degree of self-limitation?

[1] 1 John IV. 8, 16.

CHAPTER III.

CREATION THE PROPHECY OF AN INCARNATION.

THE Incarnation has been regarded by some writers as an after-thought on the part of God occasioned by the sin of man. They tell us that if man had not fallen, Christ would never have come into this world, and they regard the sin of the first man as a blessing in disguise, because it conferred upon the human race the precious gift of the Son of God. But the more thoughtfully we study the Bible, the less satisfied do we become with such a view. Throughout the Bible we find that man is regarded as the centre and goal of the natural creation. He is the centre. He occupies a position midway between the natural and the spiritual world ; he is an animal, and yet has dominion over the animals ; he is represented as created on the same day as inferior forms of life were made, and yet as endowed with higher and spiritual faculties, which they do not possess. He is the goal. The creation of the natural world points to him, and does not attain to its full significance apart from

him. The Divine life is manifested in some of its attributes in the world of nature, but it is much more fully realized in the personal life of man. Apart from man nature has no interpreter. Until man is formed, the world of nature is like a huge body without a head. Man comes as the head to interpret the movements of the whole, and to use them as the instruments of his own spiritual purposes and thoughts. But man is in his turn imperfect. He is the centre and goal of the natural world; but he himself needs a centre and a goal. He is the crown of creation, but he again stands in need of One Who shall complete and interpret his own life. The Bible indeed represents man as originally sinless, for it tells us that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him";[1] but it never represents him as perfect in himself. Some have held that because man was created sinless, he was therefore created with perfected intellectual and spiritual faculties. But there is no reason to suppose that such was the case. These faculties are the result of long and slow development. We must not even think that he was endowed with actual virtue. Virtue could only be given to him as a possibility, not as an actuality. Its presence or absence would be determined by the result of temptation.

[1] Gen. I. 27.

The life of humanity must rather be regarded as that of a complex organism, which only entered upon the first stage of its development with the existence of the first man. Humanity then began its childhood. In its childhood though sinless it was not fully developed. It contained within itself the promise of future growth. As it grew, it was like the world of nature—a body without a head. It too required One to interpret its movements and to use them as the instruments of the Divine purpose. It too was essentially imperfect without such a Head. And if we ask Who is this Head? "I would have you know," says St. Paul, "that the head of every man is Christ."[1] What man is to nature, that Christ is to man. He is at once the centre and the goal of humanity. He is the centre. Even as man is a link between nature and spirit, between the material and the immaterial, so Christ is a link between the human and the divine, between man and God. As man though an animal has dominion over the animal, so Christ though man has dominion over man. He is also the goal. If the creation of nature was a prophecy of man, the creation of man was a prophecy of the Incarnation. Nature was a revelation of God, but an imperfect revelation. It suggested more than it realized. The life of man was a fuller revelation.

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 3.

But it too was incomplete. It too suggested something more besides. Thus if nature pointed to man, man pointed to Christ. Nature was unintelligible before man came upon the scene : man is an enigma apart from an Incarnation.

Christ is thus seen to be the necessary and legitimate development of humanity. When He spoke of Himself as the Son of God, we believe that He meant that His being was a necessity in the life of God. So too when He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, did He not mean that His being was a necessity in the life of man? Did He not signify thereby that He stood in the same filial relation to man as He did to God, that humanity as well as Deity must have a son? Did He not teach us that the union of God and man which was accomplished in the Incarnation was the realization of an eternal purpose?

Such considerations as these compel us to reject the view which regards the Incarnation as an afterthought on the part of God occasioned by the sin of man. We feel bound rather to regard it as a necessary point in the development of the race, without which human life would be devoid of purpose and unity. We are thus relieved from the necessity of believing that the greatest boon which has ever been conferred on man was occasioned by his own wickedness.

Whilst some writers have regarded the Incarnation as the direct result of man's sin, others have gone to the opposite extreme and taught that not only the fact of the Incarnation, but also the manner in which it has been actually realized were eternally foreknown by God. They regard the rejection and crucifixion of Christ as foreseen before the foundation of the world. But we cannot consider such a view to be tenable. If we ask why the Lord was despised and rejected of men, the answer is because men had sinned and rebelled against God. If then the rejection of Christ was thus always foreseen, the sin of man was also eternally foreknown. But if it could be known beforehand that humanity, in the course of its evolution, would fall, then must we not regard sin as an absolute necessity in the life of man? And in that case does not the Incarnation become an impossibility? For if sin is a necessity in the life of man, Christ in becoming man would become sinful, and the Son of God would thereby contradict His own being.

We escape from this difficulty if we are willing to admit that the creation of free agents did indeed impose certain limitations on the Divine omniscience. In this case we may say that He foresaw the Incarnation absolutely, but the manner of its realization only conditionally, and that if man had not sinned, Christ would have come into the world, only He

would not have been rejected. God, we believe, eternally purposed the coming of His Son, but only foresaw His crucifixion as a necessity consequent upon a possible fall of man.[1]

Man need not have fallen. Sin might always have remained for him an unrealized possibility. And what is true of man is true of all created beings. No created being need have fallen, and in no case—we think—was his fall unconditionally known beforehand. If so, evil so far from being a necessary element in the life of the universe, was not foreseen by God save as a potentiality which might or might not be realized.

Such appears to us the doctrine of Revelation. But is it consistent with philosophical speculation? Clearly it is in direct antagonism to that of Manichæism, which regards evil and good as eternally and necessarily existing together. The bare dualism of Manichæism does not commend itself to Western minds, which strive to find a unity underlying all the diversity of the universe; and yet some modern philosophical speculations as to the nature and origin of evil are not without a resemblance to the old oriental belief. The fall is sometimes regarded as a necessary stage in the growth

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sects. 87-90, where he discusses the proposition: "Etiamsi homo non pecasset, deus tamen incarnatus esset, licet non crucifixus".

of man's rational life. It represents a transition point in the evolution of humanity from a state of nature to a state of freedom. That evolution is accomplished by the faculty of thought. But the first exercise of such a faculty must necessarily be defective and arbitrary. The result of this imperfection is what the Bible terms sin. Evil is therefore a necessary element in the upward progress of humanity. Such a position would naturally lead us back to the dualism of Manichæism; for if evil be regarded as the inevitable condition of the rational progress of finite beings, evil is a necessity in the life of the universe. This dualism can alone be avoided by assigning to evil an essentially unreal, an eternally fictitious character, and accordingly this position is adopted by a certain school of thought.[1]

But both the doctrines which affirm the necessity and the unreality of evil are, we believe, at variance with the moral consciousness of man. Conscience does not regard sin simply as an unfortunate but irremediable disease. It assigns to the former a notion of guilt which could not be attached to the latter. If sin is a mere natural necessity, an inevitable accompaniment of progress, the ideas of guilt and remorse are meaningless. Why should it be treated in a manner fundamentally different from

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sects. 81, 82.

that in which a disease or an intellectual mistake is treated? Why is a man blamed for the one and not for the other? There can be but one reason. Sin is not essential to human nature. It is not the necessary condition of human progress, but an alien growth for the presence of which man is responsible.

Neither does conscience consider evil as something eternally fictitious and non-existent. When a man does wrong, he is conscious not simply of limitation or privation: he is conscious of enslavement to a power which has brought his will into bondage. The bondage is not natural: he fights against it: he blames himself when he yields to it. Christianity gives the only satisfactory explanation. The power is not merely a fiction attempting to assert its existence, but a will power like his own. His will is in bondage to another will; his spirit is the slave of a spirit like his own. Evil has a real because a personal existence.

The doctrines of the necessity and unreality of evil do not account for the facts of our moral and spiritual life; but we cannot believe that they would have been accepted by thoughtful men unless they contained amidst many contradictions important elements of truth. These elements seem to be recognized in the Christian revelation. The first doctrine—that of the necessity of evil—arises from the acknowledged facts that evil is present in all

ordinary human beings and is to a large extent an accompaniment of human progress. Both these facts are recognized by Christianity. Evil, says the Bible, is indeed found in all ordinary human beings, but not because human nature is essentially and eternally evil, but because human nature is no longer what it once was. The life of humanity is the life of an organism. With the fall of the first man, the whole organism became tainted with evil. All the descendants of the first man spring from a deformed and vitiated stock. Their very nature is corrupted by sin. Such a doctrine denies that sin is necessarily connected with the idea of the finite: it is something entirely alien from the life of man. When it is objected that though sin is no longer regarded as a necessary condition of finite life, yet this doctrine of original sin practically treats evil as we now see it simply as an inherited disease, we reply that such an objection arises from a one-sided conception of the meaning of the doctrine. Sin is from one aspect a disease: we all belong to a diseased organism, and are therefore by nature sinful. And yet it is more than a disease. For when we sin, we do not simply submit to an inevitable fate, but we sin willingly. We inherit the disease, but when we yield to it, we yield willingly. Thereby we convert what was at first a natural infirmity into a moral delinquency. We incur

guilt: we feel remorse. The meaning of original sin and of human guilt is only understood, when we admit the truth of Creationism as well as of Traducianism. Creationists taught that each new individual was a creation fresh from the hands of God, Traducianists that each was connected with the whole previous development of the human race. Both witnessed to a truth. Each man is a fresh beginning: he comes direct from God and his life is an entirely new manifestation of the Divine will and character, seen then for the first time in this world. And yet each man is also a continuation—a link in a great chain; for he derives his human nature from the generations which have gone before. God uses the organic life of humanity—the natural development of the human race—as a means whereby He may continually show a fresh aspect of His Person, a further manifestation of His "individualizing activity". Thus each individual is connected with God as well as with man. He is responsible to God, Who has given him free will, for the attitude which he assumes to his hereditary disease.[1]

But the belief in the necessity of evil does not only arise from the universal presence of evil in ordinary human beings. It is also due to the fact that sin has been observed as a frequent accompaniment of human progress. How is this fact to be

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sects. 74, 108.

explained, unless we allow that human progress is impossible without it? The explanation which Revelation gives is this. Sin was not necessary for the rational progress of man. The opportunity of exercising free will was alone necessary. That opportunity was given to man. He was granted the power of choice. He might either choose evil or good. In either case he would be a different man from what he was before: he would have advanced in knowledge. He might have advanced by choosing good; as a matter of fact he advanced by choosing evil. The necessary condition of progress was not sin, but the exercise of the power of choice.

It may be urged that the very idea of continued human progress without sin is inconceivable. But this fact, in so far as it is a fact, is due to the terrible contradictions and anomalies occasioned by sin. That we are no longer able completely to imagine such a progress results from the fact that our mental and moral faculties have become to a large extent diseased by the presence of sin. As we read the life of Jesus Christ, we feel at times that His life would have been to some extent at least the type of the normal development of all men, if sin had never entered into the world.

The other belief of many thoughtful students—that sin is unreal and non-existent—does not, as we have already seen, explain certain facts of the moral

consciousness of man. But it attempts to express a truth, which seems to be recognized by the revelation of Christianity. Evil as we now know it comes in the form of a personal power, as a will appealing to and overmastering our will. But evil did not always have a personal existence. When rational beings were first created, evil existed only as a potentiality. It had no existence, no personality in itself.[1] It was an impersonal principle, the possibility of a false independence, the potentiality of disobedience. It needed a will created by God to give it personality. Such a will was found in the spirit whom Christians know as the Devil. Although Christianity recognizes the tyranny of the Devil and the reality of his temptations, it represents him as ever attempting to assert a fundamentally false and contradictory position, as ever striving to realize a principle that never can be completely realized, as ever aiming at an abnormal position of independence, which is beyond his power. Thus Christianity is true to the requirements of our moral consciousness, which points to the existence of a personal evil being: yet at the same time it shows that this being, whose personality is real because derived from God, is always attempting to maintain a radically false and negative position.

We may therefore conclude that modern phi-

[1] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," sect. 105.

losophy has not yet proved untenable the old belief that sin does not of necessity appertain to the being of man, but that he is made in the image of a sinless God. This belief suggests the possibility of the Creator entering into a fuller and deeper union with His creature.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SELF-LIMITATION INVOLVED IN THE INCARNATION.

We have seen that Personality and Self-limitation are not inconsistent with the philosophical conception of the Absolute, and that a very real degree of Self-limitation is involved in the creation of a world of rational agents. It now becomes our duty to inquire into the possibility of a still greater act of Self-limitation—a limitation not merely of the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, eternity and omnipresence, but of Personality itself. Is the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation consistent with the idea of an Absolute Being?

Before we can answer the question satisfactorily, we must understand clearly what that doctrine is. It is thus summed up by St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh".[1] The self-consciousness of God is not the result of creation: it is due to the existence within

[1] St. John I. 1, 14.

the Godhead of One Whose life is derived from Himself. Such a Being is a perfect manifestation of Him: the Object entirely reflects the Subject; and hence He is known not only as the Son of God, a title that conveys the conception of derivation, but also as the Word of God, a name expressing the idea of manifestation. The two titles "Word" and "Son" used together correct false impressions, which might arise from the use of either alone. A word on earth is something impersonal; the son is born later in time than his father. In the highest life the expression of the mind and purpose of the Person is complete and absolute, and is therefore itself Personal; and since that life is not of necessity conditioned by time, the Son is eternally generated from the Father. St. John then might have used the title Son, but the fact that he did not is in itself significant. To him the possibility of an incarnation was connected with the truth that within the Godhead itself there was a revealing activity. The Word eternally manifested God to Himself, revealed the inner potentialities of His Being and was the adequate expression of His character. If God thus manifested Himself to Himself through the agency of the Word, might He not manifest Himself to others by the same means? Such a line of thought suggests at once the possibility of an Incarnation and the fitness of the

method by which it was realized. We are led to see why the Son—not the Father or the Holy Spirit—was the Agent by Whom it was wrought. But the universal significance of the Incarnation of the Word can only be apprehended when we reflect upon His work in the creation of nature and man. In St. John's words: "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made. That which hath been made was life in Him; and the life was the light of men."[1] The Word, as the eternal Object of God, was to the Father what the external world is to us—the condition of thought and self-consciousness. He objectified and personified the Ideas of the Divine Mind. In Him God saw His thoughts reflected. The system of Divine Ideas which has been embodied in creation was therefore eternally manifested in the Word, and owes its unity and consistency to the fact that it is a single Personal expression of the consciousness of God. Now when the Ideas of creation were actually realized, they were realized through the Word. He gave and gives to their realization that unity and consistency which He gave to them when they were yet unrealized and

[1] St. John 1. 2, 3, 4. I have here adopted the punctuation of the margin of the Revised Version, but the argument is not materially affected if we accept that placed by the Revisers in their text.

existed only as Ideas. Hence it is that St. John says: "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made". Even the world of nature is a living whole, the expression of a single Life, the Life of the Word. He gives life and energy to its Ideas. "That which hath been made was life in Him." What is true of the world of nature is yet more true of mankind and of other rational beings. In them creation becomes self-conscious. In them the Life of the Word becomes more fully, because more intelligently, realized. The system of Ideas which depends upon Him becomes in part aware of its own existence. The life which He has given to it, by becoming conscious of its identity and freedom, ceases to be only the necessary and unconscious reproduction of His life. It has a reason of its own. Whilst therefore His life is the condition of the unity and coherency of the ideas embodied in nature, it is the rational principle in the life of man. All nature is a living whole in Him, but—in the words of St. John—"the life was the *light* of *men*".[1] There would have been no hindrance to the working out of the Ideas of creation if the natural world alone had existed; but in the sphere of freedom, there was an irrational principle which contended with, though it could not overcome, the rational. "And the light

[1] St. John I. 4.

shineth in the darkness; and the darkness did not overcome it."[1] For the rational principle ever remained, in spite of the sin of man, the one sustaining and immanent principle. "He was in the world," even though "the world knew Him not".[2]

Thus we understand that the Word in becoming flesh not only accomplished for the human race that manifestation of Deity which He had eternally effected in the Divine Life, but also revealed the Idea of creation. He showed the principle which lay beneath the world, and by means of which the world had come into existence. He manifested the archetypal Idea, of which all creation is an imperfect copy.

St. John then gives us a twofold view of the significance of the Incarnation. It is on the one hand a revelation of the Divine Life, and on the other a manifestation of the Idea underlying the natural and rational world. The Incarnation tells us Who God is by showing us His Son, and what creation is by showing us its Ideal. But as man is the goal of the natural creation, we may say that the ideal of creation means the ideal of its head—of man. Hence the Incarnation is the revelation of the Image of God and of the Ideal of man; and it can only be accomplished by One Who unites in His Person perfect Deity and archetypal, ideal

[1] St. John I. 5. [2] *Ibid.* 10.

Humanity. St. John believed that he himself had witnessed such an union in the Person of Jesus Christ. He believed that Jesus Christ was the eternal Word of God.

The doctrine of the Incarnation therefore does not maintain that One Who was God at a certain moment of time ceased to be God and became man. Such an idea would be contrary to any true philosophical conception of Deity. God can never cease to be God. True it is of His own free will that He affirms His being, that He exists. In that way He differs from us; for we do not exist of our own free will and we could not cease to exist, if we wished. But to conceive of the Son of God as wishing to affirm His own Being no more, would be to conceive of a contradiction of His very nature and of an annihilation of the universe. For the Being of the Eternal Son is a necessity in the life of the Godhead. But the doctrine does say that the same Divine Person Who was eternally the Word entered into the conditions of humanity, and took upon Himself human nature without ceasing to be God.

He took upon Himself human nature. He became man. Such was the doctrine, the whole doctrine of the Incarnation. For this truth the apostles witnessed and were content if need be to die. But even in the apostles' time the question began to be asked: "What does such a doctrine

involve? What are the essential marks of manhood?" The question was raised then for the first, but not for the last time. The more carefully men applied their intellects to the doctrine, the more needful was it to arrive at a precise conception of the meaning of manhood. Modern psychology recognizes a threefold division of the psychical life of man—reason, will, and feelings. Hence we may say that if Jesus Christ was indeed man, He must have had, not only a human body, but also a human reason, a human will and human feeling.

As we study the Christological controversies of the first six centuries, we see how this fact impressed itself with ever increasing clearness upon the consciousness of the Christian Church. At first it witnessed to the reality of the human body and feelings, then of the human mind or spirit, and lastly of the human will. Docetism taught that Christ's body was the semblance of a body and His sufferings no real sufferings. Apollinarius practically denied the reality of the human spirit or reason.[1] The Church replied by asserting that Christ was "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting". And

[1] He taught that the Λόγος took the place of the ψυχή λογική or νοῦς. Reason would not therefore be used by Apollinarius in the modern psychological sense; e.g. it would include the will. Hence the Church in condemning Apollinarianism had really already decided the question raised by Monothelitism.

when Monothelitism, which was indeed a partial revival of the error of Apollinarius, asserted that the Divine Will took the place of the human will, the Church refused to accept the doctrine, and taught that both existed in the one Personality. Thus the Church testified to the truth that the Word did indeed enter into the whole range of the complex psychological life of man, that He did not merely assume certain elements of that life, but that He took upon Himself that life in its entirety. And this position it had already asserted even before the Monothelite controversy, when it refused to admit the doctrine of Monophysitism which taught that the human nature was transformed into the Divine nature. In contradistinction to such a doctrine it witnessed to the reality of the manhood of the Lord.

But the question had already been asked: "If Christ was indeed perfect God, if He was not a Divinely gifted man or a kind of demigod, but if He was God, how are we to conceive of the union of a human reason with the Divine Reason? Are we not to believe that a human being with reason, will, and affections of his own was selected by the eternal Word of God to become His abode and to be raised by His indwelling power to perfect union with Himself?" This theory, which is usually known by the name of Nestorianism, seemed an easy explanation

of what might otherwise appear an almost unintelligible mystery. But when carefully considered, it will be seen not only to destroy the full significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation, but also to contradict the actual words of our Lord. For such a theory implies that the human nature of our Lord had a personality and individuality of its own. If this be so, the Person of the Lord cannot be said to be absolutely identical with that of the Word. He was not really the same Person as the Word, but a human person raised to an equality and unity with the Word. Now if it were possible for a single individual to be raised into eternal union with God and to partake of the Divine essence, such an act would not necessarily have any meaning for humanity as a whole. The human race would be as far from union with Deity as it was before. Moreover our Lord's words do not admit of such an explanation. He never speaks of Himself as one with the Word, but as the actual Son of God, not as one who had been raised by Divine favour to such a position. "Before Abraham was," He says, "I am".[1]

The Christian Church then does not believe that our Lord's manhood had any individuality or personality of its own; and the question at issue in discussing the philosophical arguments for the possibility of an Incarnation is not whether the Person of the

[1] St. John VIII. 58.

Word could become united with a human person, but whether the Person of the Word could enter into the conditions of manhood and could continue His life under those conditions ; that is, whether He could have a human body, a human will, a human reason and human affections, and yet not cease to be God.

The difficulty of accepting such a belief does not lie in the fact that humanity is sinful and Deity sinless, for we have seen that it is not of the essence of humanity to be sinful, and that in so far as it is sinful, it contradicts itself. Neither does it lie in the limitation of Divine attributes that it necessitates. We have already seen that some measure of limitation is involved in the creation of free agents, and we might conjecture the possibility of a still further limitation of attributes. The difficulty rather lies in conceiving of One Who is absolute submitting to the conditions of growth and of unconsciousness. The will, the reason and the affections are not essentially human, unless they are subject to the law of development and of gradual evolution from a state of entire unconsciousness into the full self-consciousness of manhood. The person to whom they belong—the " I " of which they are the expression—is not born with the full possession of his faculties, with the knowledge that " I " am not the same as the world around me. He is rather an

unconscious potentiality, that will later and gradually realize his own identity.

> The baby new to earth and sky,
> What time his tender palm is prest
> Against the circle of the breast,
> Has never thought that "this is I";
>
> But as he grows he gathers much,
> And learns the use of "I," and "me,"
> And finds "I am not what I see,
> And other than the things I touch".
>
> So rounds he to a separate mind
> From whence clear memory may begin,
> As thro' the frame that binds him in
> His isolation grows defined.[1]

Now One Who becomes Man and Who really assumes the physical and psychological conditions of humanity must experience in His own Person this gradually awakening self-consciousness, this progressive realization that "this is I". If He is at once conscious of His own identity, He cannot be called a true Man: He has not genuinely subjected Himself to the laws of mental growth. The fact that He belongs to a higher grade of Being will not cause Him to dispense with this process of development: otherwise He has not really brought Himself to the level of the lower life, which He is about to live. Otherwise He is not a true human

[1] Tennyson, "In Memoriam," XLV.

Child; He is not the new-born Babe, Who "has never thought that 'this is I'".

Can we conceive of the Son of God thus limiting not only His attributes, but also His very Person; thus becoming unconscious and subject to the laws of human development? Can we believe that He was born into this world and that His birth was "a sleep and a forgetting" of God Who was His home?

The answer which some have given to this question is that such a belief is possible, because our Lord lived two distinct lives whilst here on earth, possessing a complete consciousness in the one life, but only a gradually developing consciousness in the other. They tell us that as God in His Divine life He still retained the plenitude of His powers and of His knowledge, but that as Man, in His human life He was content to become subject to the laws of limitation and of growth. They hold that sometimes He allowed Himself to manifest His Divine power and knowledge, but that at other times He was willing to learn and to gather information like any other human being; although at the same time as God He knew absolutely that which as Man He was learning and hearing for the first time.

But such a view seems to rest on a mistaken conception of the meaning of personality. Personality is not something that can be divided. The

Ego is a unity. Now in the Incarnation the entire Person of the Son became incarnate and submitted to the physical and psychological conditions of humanity. The whole "I," and not only a part of it, came into the world. Nor does the view we mention appear to us to be in accord with the statements of the New Testament. St. Paul does not regard our Lord as limiting Himself in one sphere and yet suffering no limitation in another sphere: he looks upon the Incarnation as affecting His whole life. He "emptied himself": He "humbled himself".[1] Never once, as far as we see, does our Lord suggest that He knows or does one thing in His Divine and another thing in His human capacity: He knows and does everything as a Divinely human Person. We feel bound therefore to reject the explanation which regards our Lord as having upon earth a Personality that was at once limited and unlimited, ignorant and omniscient, unconscious and conscious. We regard the Incarnation as vitally affecting the whole and not part of His Being: we believe that when an unconscious Child, He was entirely unconscious alike of His Divine Father and of His human surroundings.

Is such a limitation of Personality inconsistent with a true idea of Deity? We ourselves believe

[1] Philippians II. 7, 8.

that it is not. If the Incarnation had involved the loss of Personality for a single moment, it would have been impossible. For the Being of God depends upon the existence of a Personal Son. But the Incarnation does not involve such a loss. It was emphatically the self-manifestation of God in the realm of Personality. It only appears to involve the loss of consciousness. Now self-consciousness is not a necessary condition of personality: a person need not be aware of his existence to be a person. In sleep we are apparently unconscious that "this is I": and yet we are none the less personal beings. Human personality is an image of a higher Personality: what is possible for human beings cannot *a priori* be stated to be impossible for a Divine Being.

It may be objected that birth is somewhat different to sleep, and that whilst it is possible to conceive of a person as still retaining his identity in spite of a period of unconsciousness, it is almost incredible that a Person could retain identity in passing from one sphere of life into another, in being born from a Divine into a human life. But we cannot see that this is so. The suggestion of two modern English poets[1] that human beings have had a life before this life, and that birth is but a forgetting of a past,

[1] See Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; Tennyson, "The Two Voices".

which can later on be very indistinctly recalled to mind, may indeed be a mere poetic fancy, but it has not usually been considered to be an absolute impossibility. Again, though the immortality of man has never perhaps been proved, it is at least philosophically conceivable. If then it is conceivable that the "Ego" should survive death and pass from a lower to a higher stage of existence and yet be conscious of its identity, it cannot *a priori* be said to be impossible to conceive of an "Ego" surviving birth and passing from a higher to a lower order of life.

It is true that in speaking of the Word, we have to regard Him not only as the Son of God, but also as the Personal Ideal of creation, as He Who sustains and guides the entire creation animate and inanimate. The whole universe is therefore dependent upon His existence: every activity is derived from Him: created persons derive their personality from Him. Could He, it may be asked, have used all His powers, when He Himself was unconscious even of His own existence? The idea is not inconceivable. Created persons may accomplish work whilst they themselves are unconscious of the fact. And might not the Uncreated Son accomplish unconsciously upon earth all that He in His Divine life wrought with full consciousness? His activity might still sustain and guide the world, even when He Him-

self was unconscious of the guidance ; for the Divine providence of the Father would not suffer the work of the Son to fail, but He would ever direct that work towards the eternal goal.

We conclude then that the Incarnation is a revelation alike of the Divine Image and the Human Ideal ; and that the self-emptying of the Word as manifested in that act is not inconsistent with a philosophical conception of Deity.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD.

If the view that we have taken of the self-limitation of the Word in the Incarnation be correct, if He allowed Himself to become an unconscious and undeveloped Child, it may naturally be asked how we can conceive of His developing under the conditions of human existence. For His development would not be that of a merely human child. As He grew older He would become conscious of His pre-existence and of His relationship to the Eternal Father. Perhaps we shall understand such a development better, if we consider for a moment the relation of the Divine and human will in His life upon earth. Christians believe that He had two wills and that the sacrifice of His life lay in the perfect accommodation of the human to the Divine will. He never willed with His human will what He did not also will with His Divine will. The former was the servant of the latter. As He developed, each will —if we judge aright—would manifest itself more

completely, but the union of the two would never be interrupted. He would not use the one in opposition to the other. In each act of His the Divine and human wills were alike realized. Now following upon these lines of thought, is it not possible that His Divine and human consciousness were similarly developed? We have seen that the Bible does not suggest the idea that He lived as it were in two planes of intellectual life; that in one plane He was conscious of every thing, whilst in the other He had a limited and developing intellect. May not this be because the Divine consciousness was entirely adapted to the human, because He never knew with one what He did not know with the other, because in each action of His the two were always united?

If we are right, then the greatness of His intellectual sacrifice lay in this, that He made His Divine consciousness the servant of His human consciousness. He refused to know as God what He had not also learnt as Man. He used His human intellectual and spiritual faculties as the instrument of His self-manifestation. As He gradually awoke from the sleep of birth, He awoke under new conditions and with limited powers. As a Child He would not even be conscious of His own identity: He would only gradually learn, even as we do, that He was other than the things He saw; and He would probably be

led to make this discovery, as we seem to be, by contact with the external world. But as He awoke to self-consciousness, to the fact that He was a Personal Being, He would become aware not only that He was Man, but also that He was more than Man. Such a discovery would force itself upon Him, because the "Ego" within Him was the Word Himself. But this discovery would not come as a sudden and extraordinary Divine intimation; it would rather be the result of a development of His consciousness, and that development would be in no small degree conditioned by external circumstances. We depend for the knowledge of our relationship with God upon the witness of our own consciousness interpreted by the revelation of Christianity: so our Lord, we believe, would in part depend for the knowledge of His unique relationship with the Father upon the witness of His own consciousness interpreted by the revelation of Judaism. Our imperfect and sinful consciousness witnesses to the fact that we stand in some relation to the Deity: Christianity interprets to us the meaning of this consciousness, and reveals God as a Father and us as His children. The Lord's sinless consciousness witnessed to the fact that He stood in a unique relation to God: Judaism in part interpreted the meaning of His consciousness by revealing to Him the prophecies of One Who should be

at once human and yet more than human. As He read the Old Testament and discovered in its pages the deepest thoughts and noblest expectations of His nation, as He learnt from His mother the story of His own miraculous birth, as He was told how the angels had pointed Him out as the Saviour and the Son of God,[1] He would gradually be able to interpret more and more surely the witness of His own Divine "Ego" to His Divine origin, and become assured that He was none other than the Eternal Son. And thus the Divine Ego would manifest itself ever more completely under human conditions, and His relationship to the Father and the object of His work on earth would be in part realized by Him. We say in part, for such a result could not be effected entirely by the revelation of Judaism. That could teach Him much, but it could not teach Him all.

How then would the rest be accomplished? We believe by means of a more direct Divine revelation. We do not say that Jesus Christ by this means allowed Himself to know as God what He did not know as Man; for we believe that He received such a revelation by means of His human faculties. He would thus learn afresh the fact of His Divine origin; and, as He learnt it, His Divine "Ego" would testify to the truth of that which He was taught.

[1] St. Matt. I. 21; St. Luke I. 35; II. 11.

Such an illumination of His human consciousness He would only permit Himself to receive in so far as it was necessary for the work He had come to do upon earth. It would be of the same kind as the revelation to great prophets and teachers throughout the world's history. It would not be a revelation of facts which He could learn by the ordinary exercise of His mind or such as did not immediately bear upon His work on earth : it would rather be the manifestation of the life of God to His human spirit and the revelation of certain facts which it was necessary to know beforehand for the success of His work, and which would thus be shown to His human consciousness.

This then is the view that we take of the relation of the Divine and human consciousness. We believe that neither was absorbed in the other, but that the former only manifested itself through the medium of the latter, and that any special revelation was communicated by an illumination of truly human faculties. We believe that as the human will was subjected to the Divine will, so conversely the Divine consciousness was subjected to the human consciousness. We shall now examine the Biblical account of the Lord's human development, and attempt to show that throughout His life before He began His public ministry there is no hint of omniscience or of a superhuman consciousness, but every

indication of a gradually developing consciousness aided by Divine illumination.

There are in the Gospel two distinct pictures of the infancy of the Lord, which are clearly derived from independent sources. The one appears to be written from the point of view of His reputed father, the other from that of His mother. But both accounts agree in this respect at least. They represent Him as a truly human Infant; and neither give us any reason to suppose that He manifested signs of a consciousness at once omniscient and limited, or that He possessed any extraordinary intelligence. In St. Matthew's account sages from the East come and worship Him, but He does not speak to them and acknowledge their homage. In St. Luke's narrative He is brought as a Babe to the Temple, but we are not told that He manifested supernatural consciousness of His surroundings. We have no reason to suppose that He was not as unconscious as an ordinary infant alike of His human and Divine surroundings. If the little Child in old Simeon's arms had shown signs of self-consciousness and of developed intelligence, we should have expected St. Luke to have noticed the fact. But he does not: and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we may say that the two accounts of our Lord's infancy represent Him as unconscious of Self and of those about Him as an infant would

naturally be. Apocryphal Gospels tell of miracles which the Lord performed as a Child ; but we read nothing of them in our Canonical records : and the fourth Gospel, it would seem, distinctly tells us that in childhood and in early manhood the Lord never displayed miraculous powers.[1]

We naturally turn from the account of Christ's infancy to that of His boyhood with the deepest interest. We long to see whether the Child when He becomes conscious of Self and of the world behaves like a truly human Child, whether He is in truth, as St. Luke seems to suggest, subject to the laws of human development.[2] Almost every really thoughtful boy at a certain period of life begins to question himself and to ask the meaning of the things which he had previously received in simple faith from his parents. He is conscious of the first stirrings of independence, the first longings to arrive at truth for himself and not to accept it on the testimony of others. He apprehends, dimly at first, that he has other ties besides those of the family and wider duties than those of the home. He feels that the life which his parents have planned for him is not necessarily the life which he must adopt. He is conscious of new and indefinable powers and longings, and expresses himself in a manner that his parents did not expect and cannot fully understand.

[1] St. John II. 11. [2] St. Luke II. 40.

If the Lord was a truly human Child, He too must have had the same experience. To Him too must have come a time when He became aware of other relationships and duties besides those of His family and His home. To Him too must have come the desire to understand the full meaning of that which He had been taught on His mother's knee.

We have only one picture of His boyhood,[1] but that picture is sufficient to show us that our Lord was indeed a true Boy. He had been brought by His parents to the busiest town in the country at the busiest time of the year. He had been taken to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. He may or may not have been there since His infancy, but at any rate He had now come up in a new capacity. He was twelve years old—the age at which a Jewish lad became a Son of the Law and began more fully to realize His legal responsibilities. His parents " when they had fulfilled the days " left the city, but " the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and His parents knew it not ". Until now He had never in all probability shown signs of independence : He had fulfilled His home duties as only the perfect Son could fulfil them. Joseph and Mary thought that He was in the company, but when they could not find Him there, they probably feared lest He had lost Himself in the crowded streets of Jerusalem.

[1] St. Luke II. 41-51.

But He had not lost Himself. He was in the temple. "And it came to pass, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." We may well suppose that the doctors were teaching their disciples the story of the great deliverance, which that feast commemorated. Jesus Christ must have heard the story before from His mother, for it was the central picture in the Jewish Bible. But the feast had impressed it upon Him as nothing else could, and He was listening eagerly to the story again, and asking what it really meant; "and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers". He manifested such interest and such thoughtfulness. He asked questions which only a boy can ask, and He answered the Rabbis with the simplicity and unconventionality of childhood. His parents were as astonished as the bystanders. He had never before behaved in this manner: He had never showed such apparent forgetfulness of them: He had never thus asserted His independence. "And when they saw him, they were astonished: and his mother said unto him, Child, why has thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I seek thee sorrowing." The reply that He gives to His mother's gentle remonstrance is the reply of a Boy, Who has become aware of other duties and relationships than those of His home, Who is

realizing perhaps for the first time His own independence. "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

Thus St. Luke shows us how the Boy Jesus manifested His independence and His realization of wider duties; how He began to show signs of a more fully developed consciousness. We are not surprised to read that His parents did not understand the saying which He spake to them, though His mother kept all that had happened in her heart. Throughout the whole scene we cannot help feeling that our Lord was a human Boy developing under human conditions. But when we have said this we have not said all. We should indeed expect the development to be human, but we should also expect it to be the manifestation of a Divine Ego. The "I" that spoke and began to realize its independence and its powers was none other than the Eternal Word: and though the Word used a human consciousness as a means of self-manifestation, yet the Self when manifested, when conscious of its own identity, would be a Divine Self. If the Child at this stage of development had only been conscious of its humanity, it would not, as far as we can see, have been the Son of God. For the first realization of independence and powers must surely have brought with it the consciousness of a relationship with Deity itself.

Accordingly we find in the Lord's first words signs of such a consciousness. His mother had said that His father and she had sought Him sorrowing, but the Child in His reply appears gently to correct His mother, and manifests a consciousness of His Divine relationship. He had but one Father, and that Father was not Joseph. "Wist ye not that I must be in my *Father's* house?" If it be asked why the knowledge of this relationship and of His own independence should have manifested itself at this particular time, we would suggest that the Boy, Whose early life had already been marked by wisdom and Divine grace;[1] as He came up then to the most sacred spot on earth at the most sacred season of the year, was reminded by the Temple and its associations of all that His mother must have told Him of His own life and of His nation's history, and also of that eternal Home, which He had left for us men and for our salvation. There was no place in the world and no time in the year which would be so likely to awaken the religious consciousness of a thoughtful Jewish boy: and if the Lord now for the first time became aware of the significance of His relationship to the Father

[1] St. Luke II. 40. Even if we take πληρούμενον σοφίᾳ in the sense of "filled with wisdom" rather than of "becoming full of wisdom," the idea of development in wisdom is not excluded, for verse 52 shows us that He was still capable of advancing therein.

and began to awaken to a memory of His eternal life before this life, we can well understand that He would not take note of the lapse of time and of the associations of His earthly home. He had found His true Home and His only Father. He had for the moment forgotten all besides. Three days had already passed, before His parents found Him.

There are those who tell us that the Lord was in reality the Teacher of the Rabbis, and that He was manifesting even now signs of omniscience, which made those who heard Him wonder at His answers; and that so far from being the obedient Pupil of the doctors, He was telling them facts which they had never heard before. Such a view seems to destroy the reality of the Lord's childhood, and to be at variance with the narrative of St. Luke. It is true that Jesus probably taught the doctors by that one conversation more than they had ever known: it is true that all who heard were amazed at His understanding and His answers. But have we never seen a little child who has taught us more in a single conversation than the wisest of men, not by a manifestation of extraordinary knowledge, but by his simple faith in the truth of the lesson and the honesty of the teacher, and by his longing to understand its inner meaning? Have we never known a child whose answers and understanding have been better, because more simple and unworldly than our own?

May not the perfect Child have taught not by a revelation of omniscience, but by listening and questioning? May not He have astonished His hearers not by superhuman knowledge but by intelligent interest and thoughtful answers? There is nothing in St. Luke's words necessarily to suggest omniscience. There are on the contrary signs of growing intelligence and willingness to learn. The Boy is sitting in the midst of the doctors, and is listening to them and questioning them. Apparently He first hears what they say and then asks what it means. Sitting—as we see from the New Testament itself[1]—was not an unusual position for a disciple to assume. When His parents come, He speaks His first recorded words. These words show a profound moral sense not merely of duty, but of duty which is also necessity: "I *must* be in my Father's house;" but they do not suggest any superhumanly developed reasoning faculty. Indeed the question "How is it that ye sought me?" is very natural as coming from a child, but would scarcely

[1] St. Mark III. 32. Cf. Acts XXII. 3, where St. Paul speaks of himself as brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel". Upon one occasion indeed the multitude stood on the beach to listen to our Lord; but they probably did so because He Himself was sitting in a boat: St. Matt. XIII. 2. Cf. Vitringa, *Syn. Vet.* I. 1. cap. VII. According to St. Matthew's account our Lord sat when He pronounced the Beatitudes; according to St. Luke's He may possibly have stood: St. Matt. V. 1; St. Luke VI. 17.

be natural if spoken by one who was older. A child might be so absorbed in the present as to forget all else besides. The wonderful lessons which He was learning, the feelings and longings called forth so intensely at that particular time, would occupy His whole consciousness: He would almost forget that others did not share His emotions, and that they were anxiously searching for Him: and when at length His parents came, He would look up with boyish wonder and simplicity, and ask, "How is it that ye sought me?" On the lips of a child the words are those which we might well expect to hear; if spoken by an older person would they not sound strange and perhaps even unfeeling?

The Lord then was a human Child and, as far as we can judge, showed no signs of extraordinary intelligence. Of His development from childhood to manhood we know but little. For a period of about eighteen years He seems to have lived in His home at Nazareth, and to have helped Joseph at his trade as a carpenter.[1] That He never attended any of the great Rabbinical schools but received His education in the place where He lived may perhaps be inferred from the surprise which the Jews at Jerusalem showed at the extent of His learning, when He became a public teacher. "The Jews therefore," says St. John, "marvelled, saying, How knoweth

[1] St. Mark VI. 3.

this man letters, having never learned?"[1] What external influences and modes of thought would affect a Jewish boy who was brought up at Nazareth we shall not here attempt to determine. He would undoubtedly be instructed in the Jewish law, and on the Sabbath He was accustomed to go to the Synagogue, where He would hear the Old Testament read.[2] He does not at this time seem to have impressed his neighbours with the possession of any extraordinary powers or knowledge. On the contrary when at the beginning of His Galilæan ministry He returns to His native place and speaks in the Synagogue, they are astonished that Joseph's son should utter such gracious words.[3] The little that we can gather of His life at this time suggests a gradual and natural development. Indeed St. Luke tells us that it was a time of growth, and this growth was not alone in bodily stature but in other ways as well. "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."[4] It was a period of preparation for definite work in the future. The sense of relationship to the Eternal Father, which showed itself already at the age of twelve, must have deepened year by year, and with it must have come a consciousness of His mission in life. As He read the Old Testament, as He

[1] St. John VII. 15.
[2] St. Luke IV. 16.
[3] *Ibid.* 22.
[4] *Ibid.* II. 52.

studied His nation and realized the significance of His own Personality, He must have recognized with increasing definiteness that He was the Saviour of His people. But He waited until He was about thirty years of age before He began to teach.[1] His first public act was His baptism by John the Baptist. Then perhaps for the first time He saw the full meaning of His past life and realized all that His relationship to the Father involved. A revelation was made to Him from above. There came a voice from Heaven, which confirmed by a Divine assurance the witness of His human consciousness: "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased".[2]

The Baptism has indeed been regarded simply as an act of condescension on the part of One Who had no need to be baptized, and Who had beforehand all that Baptism could give. But the Gospel narrative suggests that our Lord did then receive a definite gift of inspiration. St. Luke tells us that when He had been baptized and was praying, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him "in a bodily form, as a dove".[3] This manifestation of the Spirit may possibly have been but a Divine testimony to His Sonship for the sake of the bystanders;[4] but viewed in the light of

[1] St. Luke III. 23. The Levites entered upon their service at thirty years of age: Num. IV. 47.

[2] St. Luke III. 22. [3] *Ibid.* [4] Cf. St. John I. 33.

the events which followed, such an interpretation can scarcely be considered the most natural. For the force of two of the temptations that shortly afterwards presented themselves to our Lord seems in no small degree to depend upon the fact that at Baptism He realized for the first time the full meaning of the lessons that He had been learning for some eighteen years. During those years He must have seen more and more clearly what His work would be. Gradually He must have recognized that it would extend through the whole country and beyond its borders, and He must have pondered on the opposition that it would encounter and the struggles He would pass through. Already we may believe that He was learning obedience by the things which He suffered,[1] and that He must have seen that in the future other and harder lessons were in store. At last the time came for action, and He began by submitting to the rite of Baptism. Then in a moment the full meaning of those silent years of preparation dawned upon Him, the full significance of His relationship to the Father was made evident. The Spirit of Power descended upon Him, and the boundless scope of His world-wide work was seen. He retired for a season of lonely communion with the Father, and then He felt as perhaps never before the reality of

[1] Heb. v. 8.

temptation. What was the meaning of His life? What were these memories of another life before this life? What were these powers within Him asserting themselves with fresh intensity? Was He in truth the Son of God, or were all His feelings and thoughts deceptive? If our Lord's development was such as we believe it to have been, if He did indeed arrive at the meaning of His life through the medium of His human consciousness; His first and greatest temptation at this time must have been the temptation to believe that the whole of His life was but self-deception. Could He, the Son of Mary—He whom His neighbours regarded as the son of the village carpenter—He Who was Himself a carpenter by trade—could He be the Son of God? Must He not be deceived? There was one way of proving to Himself once and for all that He was not. At Baptism the Holy Spirit had seemed to descend upon Him: He thought He had heard a voice which said "Thou art my beloved Son," and He believed that He had received new powers such as prophets of old had possessed. If so, He could prove for Himself the reality of that voice by seeing whether He had in very truth the powers. If He was indeed the Son of God, He could satisfy His hunger by those powers which had been given to Him, and He could place Himself in positions of danger and yet escape

unharmed. "The tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. . . . If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down."[1] The full force of these temptations is probably only seen when we admit that Baptism conferred upon Him greater powers and clearer knowledge of His relationship to the Father than He had ever possessed before.

The Biblical account therefore of our Lord's development does not contradict our view of the accommodation of His divine to His human consciousness. Nay, does not a careful consideration of it almost suggest some such view?

Thus far we have traced His life to the beginning of His work as a public Teacher: we shall now study the accounts of His public life with the object of trying to form some conception of the extent of His knowledge whilst living as a Man among men.

[1] St. Matt. iv. 3, 6.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD.

In discussing the nature and extent of Christ's knowledge upon earth, it is well to remember at the outset that He Himself did not claim to be omniscient. On one occasion He was definitely asked the date of a certain event; it was no less important an one than that of His own second coming. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Our Lord replies that the certainty of His coming is greater than that of any other event: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". But He also states that He does not know the exact time when the Advent will take place: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only".[1] If we take

[1] St. Matt. XXIV. 3, 35, 36. Cf. St. Mark XIII. 4, 32. The words translated "end of the world" in Matt. XXIV. 3 may perhaps be rendered "consummation of the age," as in the margin of the Revised Version. Even if we omit the words "neither the Son" in St.

these words in their natural meaning our Lord clearly states that His knowledge has limits. It may be said that He knew in one sphere of consciousness what He did not know in another; but such a view, which, as we have seen, is hard to reconcile with our ideas of the unity of personality, is not suggested by the words of our Lord. He simply says that the Son does not know. If He wished to emphasize the fact that He was only ignorant in His human capacity, might He not have spoken of Himself as "the Son of Man"? To our mind the only real question at issue in this verse is whether the words refer to the Son in His eternal life in the Godhead or only to the Son when living upon earth under human conditions. It would be beyond our immediate purpose to discuss the question at length, though the fact that after His resurrection, when "all authority" had been given unto Him "in heaven and on earth,"[1] He could still speak of certain times and seasons as set by the Father "within his own authority,"[2] would almost suggest the former interpretation.[3]

Matt. XXIV. 36, yet our argument might be proved from St. Mark XIII. 26-32.

[1] St. Matt. XXVIII. 18. [2] Acts I. 7.

[3] If so, we may suppose that it was not only here upon earth that He was willing thus to limit His knowledge, and refused to know that which the Father alone knew. In saying this, we do not mean that ignorance was a necessity in the life of the Godhead,

Just as our Lord did not claim omniscience, so also He did not claim omnipotence. He confessed that whilst He was able to promise the cup of sorrow, it was beyond His power to fulfil the request of the mother of Zebedee's children. "To sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give." Another had this power, not He Himself. "It is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." [1]

Such words as these on the part of our Lord throw some light upon that statement, which from an early time has caused thoughtful students very real difficulty: "The Father is greater than I".[2] To determine its meaning we must study its context. The disciples, said Christ, if they had loved Him, would have rejoiced when they heard Him speaking of going away and coming to them; and the reason He gives for such joy is because He was going to the Father, and the Father was greater than He. There does not appear to be anything in the context to suggest the idea that the Lord is

for any such limitation would be voluntary. It is right also in using such a term as "ignorance" to remember that our knowledge of the Being of God is very limited, for we are not able to apprehend Him from the point of view of the eternal world. That our human modes of thought do, however, represent a substantial truth in His inner life we have attempted to show at the end of Chapter I. (pp. 20-22).

[1] St. Matt. XX. 23. [2] St. John XIV. 28.

speaking of Himself simply as Man or that the action of the verb (ἐστιν) is limited to His life upon earth. As it was the same "Ego" Who said these words and the words "I and the Father are one,"[1] may not both statements, and not only the latter, express what is true of Him as God and man, in His Divine and in His human life? If so, does there not seem to be—if we may so speak—an eternal fitness in the Son's submitting to limitations which the Father had never similarly known?

As we read our Lord's life we find fresh indications of limitation in knowledge, and we look in vain for signs of a twofold sphere of consciousness. Again and again He manifests curiosity or surprise: "What, are ye also without understanding?" "Do ye not yet understand?" "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest thou not watch one hour?"[2] Such words as these are natural from One whose consciousness was limited, unnatural from One Who knew all things everywhere. Jesus wondered, say St. Matthew and St. Luke, when He heard the words of the centurion at Capernaum. "He wondered because of their unbelief," says St. Mark, when he tells of His visit to His native place.[3] Could omniscience

[1] St. John x. 30.

[2] *Ibid.* vii. 18 (I have taken οὕτως in the same sense as in St. Matt. xxvi. 40); viii. 21; xiv. 37.

[3] St. Matt. viii. 10; St. Luke vii. 9; St. Mark vi. 6: θαυμάζειν is the verb used in each case.

wonder? Or did Jesus Christ know, and yet not know, all the facts of the case beforehand? Again we find Him asking questions not simply for the sake of giving men an opportunity of unburdening their hearts to Him,[1] but also, as it would appear, that He may gain information: "What is thy name?" "How many loaves have ye?" "How long time is it since this hath come unto him?" "Where have ye laid him?"[2] In these questions He seems to be anxious to learn facts which He would not otherwise have known.

But it may be urged that although Christ usually appears to have used His human faculties as a means of arriving at truth, yet in some cases He has supernatural knowledge of certain facts. Must He not on particular occasions have allowed Himself to learn by means of His Divine omniscience what He otherwise would not have known? We ourselves believe that such cases may in part be explained as the result of His deep spiritual intuition or of His careful study of the scriptures; and that when they cannot be explained thus, the revelation was not essentially different from that which prophets have also received. The spiritual intuition of the sinless Man was perfectly developed, and His moral faculties trained to the utmost. We

[1] Cf. St. Luke XXIV. 19.

[2] *Ibid.* VIII. 30; St. Mark VI. 38; IX. 21; St. John XI. 34.

should therefore expect that His insight into human character and motives would be better than that of any other man. Divine illumination has been given to other men, and has guided them and has revealed to them facts in so far as it was necessary for the purpose of their mission that they should know them. The same divine illumination might be vouchsafed to the Man Christ Jesus. But let us consider some of the passages which are thought to point to the possession of extraordinary knowledge of persons and events.

His two most intimate disciples, Peter and John, bear witness to His knowledge. "Jesus," says St. John, "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him;" and He refused to trust Himself to the men at Jerusalem, "for that he knew all men" and "he himself knew what was in man". "Lord, thou knowest all things," says St. Peter; "thou knowest that I love thee."[1] Nor can we wonder at St. Peter's words, when we remember that the Lord had told beforehand of his denial and of the flight of the disciples. The testimony of these two men is confirmed by others who knew our Lord. More than once we are told that He discerned the thoughts of those with whom He spoke.[2] "He told me," said the

[1] St. John VI. 64; II. 24, 25; XXI. 17.
[2] St. Matt. IX. 4; XII. 25.

woman of Samaria, "all things that ever I did."[1] In her case He had shown His power to disclose the details of a guilty life. So too He knew Nathaniel's character and part at least of his previous history. As He saw him coming, He said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."[2]

The knowledge of human character and human life which Jesus Christ here manifests is, we believe, profounder than that of any other man who ever lived. But at the same time it is like in kind to that deep moral insight which reads the character and even to some extent the history of a man at a glance. It is like in kind, and yet it far exceeds mere moral insight; for this insight might indeed enable our Lord to know a man's character, but it could scarcely reveal to Him such a detail of his previous life as that which He certainly knew in the case of Nathaniel. This knowledge is rather of the same nature as that which the Lord manifested

[1] St. John IV. 39. All that our Lord actually told her of her past life is probably found in verses 17 and 18. If so, we must regard the words in verse 39 as a natural exaggeration on the part of the woman.

[2] *Ibid.* I. 47, 48.

when He told two of His disciples that if they went into the city a man should meet them bearing a pitcher of water, or when He told Peter that if he went to the sea and cast a hook, and took the first fish that came up, he would on opening its mouth find a shekel.[1] Such facts could not have been discovered either by moral insight or by reasoning powers; they must have been learned by Divine illumination. But is this illumination essentially different from that which Isaiah must have received if we allow that he foretold the fate of Sennacherib's army, or to that of the Christian prophet Agabus who "signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius," and who knew beforehand that St. Paul would be delivered at Jerusalem "into the hands of the Gentiles"?[2]

In some cases it is not easy to say how far our Lord's knowledge of Scripture and His moral insight were by themselves sufficient to suggest future events. Thus the prophecies of His sufferings, His death and His resurrection may have been in part the result of His study of the Old Testament. For He seems to have seen from the writings of the prophets that the Christ must suffer before He

[1] St. Mark XIV. 13; St. Matt. XVII. 27. Cf. also St. Mark XI. 2.

[2] Isaiah XXXVII. 33, 34. Acts XI. 28; XXI. 11.

entered into His glory.[1] In part they may have been the result of His moral insight. He knew that the Jews would not be content until they had killed Him, for they hated His goodness, and hatred, as He Himself taught, is near akin to murder.[2] But spiritual intuition and the study of the Old Testament would scarcely have told Him all. We do not think that He would thus have learnt for certain the precise time that He would be in the grave.[3] The passages in Hosea and Jonah which might be cited are not to our minds conclusive.[4] We incline rather to the belief that He received such exact knowledge by a Divine illumination of His human consciousness, because without it His mission might have failed. Must He not have been able to tell His disciples the length of time He would be in the grave, so that they might know when He was raised that the Resurrection was part of a Divine plan and no mere accident of nature? If so, we do not think that such knowledge differs essentially from that which we saw that a prophet like Agabus possessed. We do well to contrast with this definite statement the indefinite manner in which the promise of the Holy Spirit was given. He did not mention the number of days that should elapse before the Spirit

[1] Cf. St. Luke XVIII. 31; XXIV. 25, 26.
[2] St. Matt. V. 21-26. [3] *Ibid.* XVI. 21.
[4] Hosea VI. 2; Jonah I. 17.

came. He only said: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence".[1] He may or may not have known the time Himself. Perhaps He refused to know it, because such knowledge may not have been necessary for the working out of the Divine plan. The great truth was that the Spirit would come, and the disciples' ignorance of the day would only keep them in more earnest prayer and expectation.

Thus we have seen that our Lord did not claim to be omniscient, but that on one occasion He definitely stated that His knowledge was limited. We have tried to show how His words suggest that He was willing to learn the ordinary facts of life by means of His human faculties, and that when He manifested signs of extraordinary knowledge of persons or events such knowledge is accounted for partly by His study of the Old Testament, partly by His perfectly developed moral insight, and partly by a Divine illumination of His human consciousness.

Yet as we read the Gospel, we are profoundly impressed with the fact that however limited His knowledge may have been in other respects, on three points at least, when He began His public work, it was absolute. He knew the purpose of His life-work: He knew all moral and religious truth: He

[1] Acts i. 5.

knew the significance of His own Personality and the relation in which He stood to the Father and the Holy Spirit. That He knew perfectly the nature of His work in this world and was an infallible Teacher of theological and ethical truth does not, as far as we can see, disprove any of our conclusions. The relationship in which He stood to the Eternal Father He would know, because His "Ego" was none other than that of the Eternal Son. As it manifested itself under human conditions, His "Ego" would gradually progress to full self-consciousness. But as it attained to self-consciousness, it would also attain to consciousness of the Father because, as the Lord said, "I and the Father are one;"[1] and the Son would remember His eternal life with the Father.

But if He had a memory of another life, would He not by means of such a memory be able to know all the details of past history without learning them? and if He had a Divine illumination at times, may He not thereby have been acquainted with many scientific and historical facts which those around Him did not know? Our answer to such questions is that if we are right in believing that He did indeed condescend to the limitations of our intellectual life, and allowed His Divine consciousness to become the servant of His human conscious-

[1] St. John x. 30.

ness; we cannot suppose that He would make use of such a memory for ascertaining ordinary facts of life which He would not otherwise have known, or that He would have received Divine illumination on details of criticism and history, when the knowledge of them was not necessary for the main work of His life. Does not Divine illumination generally quicken the human faculties, and when it reveals to a man special details, are not the details only such as it was essential for the success of his work that the person should know?

CHAPTER VII.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.

"THINK not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."[1] These words, which form the text of a discourse on the Jewish Law,[2] show us the attitude of our Lord in relation to the Old Testament. His teaching is in no way opposed to it, but is the necessary development of all that has gone before. It is the fulfilment, not the overthrow, of the deepest hopes and noblest ideals that have found expression in the literature of the Jewish nation. To illustrate this truth, our Lord examines several of the precepts of the Law and shows how His teaching accords with and develops the best conceptions which they embodied. He points out the eternal significance of the principles underlying the precepts of morality

[1] St. Matt. v. 17, 18. [2] *Ibid.* 17-48.

contained in the Old Testament, whilst at the same time He makes those precepts less outward and less formal, and therefore stricter and more binding than before. The Jewish Law, adapted as it was to a less highly civilized society, dealt with actions : Christian ethics is concerned with the springs of actions, with motives and intentions. Murder and adultery were condemned by the old Law : Christ condemns not only the acts, but also the passions—the hatred and lust—of which these acts are the final expression. The Law put certain checks on divorce, rash swearing, retaliation : Christ develops the Law and places more effective restraints upon them. Throughout the discourse our Lord regards the Old Testament from a moral rather than a mental standpoint. His appeal is primarily to the practical, not to the intellectual side of our nature. It is true that the more we study this chapter, the more do we become convinced of its intellectual power. The analysis of human motives, the power of tracing actions to their source, the intellectual grasp of great principles underlying particular commands, the sublimity of thought and expression—these cannot but strike to a greater or less degree the careful student. Yet the deepest and most permanent impression that is left on the reader is undoubtedly not that of the mental acuteness, but of the profound ethical insight of the Speaker. We have no definite appeal to the

intellect, no suggestion of superhuman mental power, no sign of omniscience. The Preacher of the sermon does not apparently teach one new fact of textual criticism that we did not know before.

Nor does this sermon stand alone. In most cases, where Jesus Christ is teaching us the meaning of the Old Testament, the appeal is to the heart rather than to the head. He adds—we believe—no fresh details of historical information : He never seems to correct traditions concerning the authorship of books : He quotes writings by their ordinary names, and does not question the appropriateness of the titles. But each passage that He quotes is a different passage ever afterwards. It is illuminated and transfigured. For the first time its inmost spiritual meaning is seen.

That this is the general effect of our Lord's teaching on the Old Testament will be admitted by many, we had almost said by most, schools of thought. At the same time not a few writers feel that there are cases where He used the Old Testament in such a way as indirectly to throw light on historical and literary problems of the first importance. Thus there are, it is urged, particular statements of our Lord that definitely assign a certain work to a certain writer. Do not such statements settle questions of authorship once and for all ? Again there are references to certain events

and practical lessons drawn therefrom. Must not such events have actually occurred?

In order to arrive at any definite conclusion on these points, we ought to study carefully the words of our Lord. For a hasty criticism is apt to misinterpret their bearing on the questions at issue. Thus some would tell us that Exodus must have been written by Moses, because in arguing with the Sadducees our Lord refers to Exodus as the book of Moses. But when we study the passage, we find that such a view is not that which is necessarily suggested by the context. Our Lord is proving the reality of a Resurrection to the Materialists of that time. They acknowledged the authority of the Pentateuch and He therefore proves the doctrine from the Pentateuch. He refers to a particular text in Exodus. A modern writer would refer to it as Exodus, Chapter III, verse 6. But at that time the book had not been divided into chapter and verse. It was part of the Law of Moses, and the particular passage was probably known by the name of "The Bush," as it gave a description of the burning bush that Moses saw. Our Lord therefore refers to it as "The book of Moses," "The Bush". "But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the Bush, how God spake unto him . . . ?"[1] He thereby im-

[1] St. Mark XII. 26. Cf. St. Luke XX. 37.

presses His hearers with something like the same degree of definiteness in His reference as a modern writer would by reference to it as Exodus, third chapter, sixth verse. Here, at any rate, we have no sign of knowledge superior to His contemporaries and no settlement of the now fiercely debated question as to the authorship of the book. A critic who assumed from such a reference that our Lord regarded Moses as the writer of the passage, ought also—we think—on hearing a modern writer refer to Isaiah LIII. or the "Iliad" of Homer to assume that the writer considers that Isaiah wrote the chapter or that Homer wrote the poem referred to. As a matter of fact men constantly refer to books by their popular names without thereby stating their own opinion as regards their origin. Our Lord's words therefore do not to our mind pre-judge the question of authorship.

But it may be urged that though some of our Lord's statements may be explained in this way, yet there is one passage in which He clearly refers to David as the writer of a particular Psalm, and thus definitely settles a disputed point of literary criticism; for He assigns to David a work which some modern critics believe to have been written after the time of David. Before we examine this passage, it will be useful to notice another in which our Lord also makes reference to David. It is a

very remarkable passage, for as it stands it suggests not merely that the Lord's knowledge was limited, but that it was possible for Him to make a historical mistake. According to the two oldest manuscripts of St. Mark's Gospel, our Lord referred to David's violation of the ceremonial law as taking place not, as the Old Testament says,[1] in the high-priesthood of Ahimelech, but in that of Abiathar, who was the son of Ahimelech. "And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?"[2] *If*

[1] 1 Sam. XXI. 1-6.

[2] St. Mark II. 25, 26. The testimony of the principal uncials in this passage is divided. The two oldest—ℵB—read *ἐπὶ Ἀβιάθαρ ἀρχιερέως*, whilst AC read *ἐπὶ Ἀβιάθαρ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως*. Even if we adopt the latter reading, the main difficulty still remains. For if our Lord does not actually assert that the event happened "when Abiathar was high priest," but only "in the days of Abiathar the high priest," yet why—as it has well been asked—was Abiathar's name mentioned in the narrative, except as being one of the principal characters in the scene enacted? But in the account in Samuel we do not even hear that Abiathar was present. The same objection may be urged against the view that *ἀρχιερεύς* is here used simply to denote an important priest. It is indeed possible that the mistake, if there be one, was made by the writer of this incident in the Gospel. He is generally considered to have been writing to Romans, and he might therefore not be familiar

our Lord's words are correctly reported, He has apparently, as far as we can judge, made a chronological mistake, by placing the event in the high-priesthood of the son instead of the father.

Bearing this passage in mind let us examine the other reference to David.[1] The Pharisees had in answer to a question of our Lord stated that the Messiah was the son of David. Our Lord in reply teaches them that such a title was not by itself sufficient to explain the Messiah's authority. For the Messiah was not only David's son, He was also a Being superior to David. Did not David himself in a certain

with details of Jewish history. On the other hand we must remember that both external (cf. Papiae Fragmenta II. 15) and internal evidence seem to point to the fact that the writer or one of the writers had the assistance of St. Peter, who was a Jew. If we conclude that the mistake was made by the writer, we must be willing to admit the possibility of similar important mistakes in the recorded words of our Lord. There are perhaps six solutions to the question :

i. The writer of the Gospel or this part of the Gospel made a mistake.

ii. We have not extant a perfect text of the Gospel in this passage.

iii. There is no mistake, but we do not understand enough of Jewish history or Jewish customs to reconcile the statement made here with the account in 1 Sam. XXI.

iv. The writer of the narrative in 1 Sam. made a mistake.

v. The text of 1 Sam. in this place is imperfect.

vi. Our Lord may have made a chronological mistake.

[1] St. Matt. XXII. 41-46. Cf. St. Mark XII. 35-37 ; St. Luke XX. 41-44.

Psalm address Him as his Lord? "If David then calleth Him Lord, how is he His son?"[1] Everyone is silenced by the question and no one, as far as we are told, disputes the validity of the argument. The Psalm which our Lord quotes is the hundred and tenth. The title ascribes it to David; but some modern critics question the fact of the Davidic authorship. Now the point at issue is whether our Lord by speaking of the first verse of the Psalm as David's forecloses the question of authorship. Does not His whole argument depend for its force upon the fact that David wrote it? Must not David therefore have written it? If we study the words very carefully, we shall see that it is perhaps possible to regard them as an "argumentum ad hominem," and to suppose that our Lord simply condescended to argue with His hearers on their own premises, whilst He Himself was aware that those premises were false. In that case we must imagine that for the moment He assumed that the position of the Pharisees was correct, that David did write the Psalm, and that He proved from their own premises the unsoundness of their conclusions.[2] To our mind such a view gives a possible, but not an entirely satisfactory explanation. For if the Lord had known for certain that David did not write the

[1] St. Matt. XXII. 45.

[2] Cf. Gore, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," pp. 196-201.

Psalm, we should scarcely have expected Him to adopt the line of argument that He did. Might He not have proved His point, and have urged the Pharisees to consider earnestly their own position, by a reference to writings that He knew were David's, or, if this were impossible, by adopting some other line of argument? Would He have deliberately chosen a passage which He knew that David did not write?[1] But whilst we regard this view as unsatisfactory, we do not therefore feel bound to assert the Davidic authorship of the Psalm. For we cannot help feeling that if we are right in supposing that our Lord did not know more than His countrymen on questions of textual criticism or biblical authorship, but graciously submitted to the intellectual limitations of human life, then He might have chosen a passage that was popularly ascribed to David without Himself examining the arguments for or against the Davidic authorship.

As we have given above an *apparent* error on the part of our Lord in a question of Biblical chronology, we dare not decide *a priori* that the passage before us cannot possibly be an error.

[1] The words—"David himself said" or "saith"—which St. Mark and St. Luke represent our Lord as saying are not those which we should in this case have naturally expected. It is noticeable however that St. Matthew puts the words in the form of a question: "How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying . . . ?" (St. Matt. XXII. 43; St. Mark XII. 36; St. Luke XX. 42).

We do not therefore consider our Lord's statements as necessarily prejudging the question of authorship.

In the same way, when our Lord says: "Did not Moses give you the law?" "Moses . . . suffered you to put away your wives." "Offer the gift that Moses commanded,"[1] we do not suppose that He settles for all time that Moses is the author of the whole Jewish law, and that it was Moses who formulated the particular social and ceremonial enactments to which He refers. He may simply speak of Moses as the great lawgiver, because the Jews of that time regarded Him as such, and because the laws were ascribed in the Old Testament to Moses. There is nothing to show that He had special knowledge on such points, and that He did not follow in these matters the best contemporary Jewish criticism, which may or may not have been entirely correct. If so, His words do not infallibly determine the source of the writings ascribed to Moses.

Once again, it is said that certain events recorded in the Old Testament must have actually occurred, because the Lord refers to them and draws lessons therefrom. It is urged that to resolve any portion of the Old Testament quoted by our Lord into myth or drama is inadmissible. The Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fate of Lot's wife,

[1] St. John VII. 19; St. Matt. XIX. 8; St. Matt. VIII. 4.

and the story of Jonah are referred to by our Lord:[1] they must therefore be actual historical events. But here again it may be asked whether He is not reasoning with His hearers from their own historical standpoint, or whether—and this explanation seems much more probable and satisfactory to us—He is not simply following the best Biblical criticism of the men amongst whom He lived. Before, however, we adopt either explanation, we do well carefully to note our Lord's language, for we may thus be led to doubt how far His arguments really depend for their cogency upon the historical nature of the incidents to which He refers. May not the destruction of Sodom, the Flood and the fate of Lot's wife be selected as typical judgments? In that case would the lessons drawn from them lose their force, if it could be proved that the accounts of them in the Old Testament are in a greater or less degree legendary? Again, would the significance of the story of Jonah as a type of the Son of Man be impaired, if the book were shown to be a drama and not a record of historical facts?

It may be objected to some of the conclusions which we have drawn in this Chapter that fallibility implies peccability, and that a perfectly moral man could not make critical mistakes. But such an objection seems to arise from an insufficient analysis

[1] Cf. St. Luke XVII. 26-33; XI. 29, 30, 32; St. Matt. XII. 38-41.

of the sources of error, and is, we believe, opposed to the experience of mankind. If a sinless man could not make a critical mistake, must not all such mistakes be regarded as sins? Yet are mental errors usually considered in the same light as moral delinquencies? A person when he sins feels a keen sense of remorse, which he does not experience when he makes a mistake. Take a simple instance. A schoolboy when detected cheating will allow that he did what he knew he ought not to have done, what his conscience told him not to do. The same boy, when discovered making a blunder in his lessons, will allow that he was inaccurate, but he will not go on to say, "My conscience told me that I ought to have known better". And why? Because a mistake is not the same as a sin. Until a mental blunder can be shown to be the same as a breach of the moral law, we cannot assert that a perfectly moral man cannot make critical mistakes.[1] Since then the best men may make such mistakes, can we deny that our Lord might do the same? If "it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren,"[2] are we at liberty to assert that in this

[1] Whilst many mistakes are the direct or indirect result of wilful carelessness, some cannot—we believe—be traced to such a source. Thus a boy may have diligently learnt his task, and yet be unable to repeat it accurately when required to do so by his master.

[2] Heb. II. 17.

particular respect He was altogether unlike them? Is there any reason why He should have refused to submit to this condition of our intellectual life? His manhood, possessing as it did no separate individuality of its own, had a universality which does not belong to ours; but was it therefore free from error? As the ideal and goal of manhood, it was at each period of life ideally and completely developed; but is fallibility in regard to critical and historical details inconsistent with such development?[1]

But it may be said that though it is possible to regard our Lord as making mistakes in His private intercourse with men, in His public teaching He must always have been infallible, for He taught with an indisputable authority that is inconsistent with the supposition of error. Now, as we have already shown, in certain respects His knowledge does appear to be absolute.[2] For instance, on all questions touching moral and religious truth He must have been infallible. His moral consciousness would not have allowed Him to make a mistake. Nay, we may go farther and say that in illustrating

[1] Is there any reason to think that because our Lord's manhood was ideally and completely developed, therefore His mind was as great as the minds of all other men combined? We do not suppose that His body was necessarily of gigantic and extraordinary strength, because His manhood was fully developed.

[2] See p. 84.

the truths of religion and morality, He would never have used as authoritative statements of the will of God books which had been written upon immoral principles. Thus the fact that He quotes Deuteronomy three times at a critical period of His life[1] seems to prove that the book could not have been a mere forgery. But when we use this term we ought to add that our conception of what constitutes forgery must always be derived not from our current European standards but from patient and thoughtful investigation of Semitic life and thought. When our Lord was teaching ethical and religious truth, as also when He was speaking of His work in the world and of His relationship with the Father, He was infallible. But need such infallibility extend to matters of historical and textual criticism? We do not think so. For the possibility of His making a mistake on such questions in His public teaching would not impair His authority as our Lord and Master. He would still be the Revelation of God Himself. He would still be the Truth[2] manifesting Himself under human conditions. His mistake would be but the sign that His authority did not depend upon the possession of superhuman intellectual powers. We should be enabled to see more clearly than perhaps by any other means that the

[1] St. Matt. IV. 4, 7, 10. Cf. Deut. VIII. 3; VI. 16; VI. 13.
[2] St. John XIV. 6.

object of His life upon earth was to unite us to God and to reveal the principles and the ground of morality, rather than to tell us historical details that could be learnt by patient exercise of our own intellectual powers. And would not His very mistake be the most touching proof that He had in His inestimable love "emptied Himself"[1] and entered into the limitations of our human life? Should we not feel as we never felt before that He who spake as our Lord and Master was yet bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh?

[1] Phil. II. 7.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

FIRST PART.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARGUMENT STATED.

THE Old Testament has long been considered to afford clear and valuable testimony to the truths of the Christian religion. Attempts have been made to prove that in the life of Christ and of His Church we have literal fulfilments of a large number of isolated words and phrases written by prophets who lived several centuries before He was manifested. Apologists have pointed to the old prophets and have said: "See what is written there". They have pointed to the New Testament and said: "See how this is fulfilled here. Can there be any doubt that Christianity is part of a Divine plan? How otherwise could men have been enabled to predict with such extraordinary accuracy the minutest details of the future life of Jesus Christ?"

Such a line of argument is upon the surface plausible, and to a certain class of minds is pecu-

liarly attractive. But it has this objection. Almost all these isolated predictions are susceptible of different interpretations. Some can apparently be explained without any direct and necessary reference to the historical Christ by the events of the prophet's own age. Others rest upon translations which are more than doubtful. Others again are regarded by eminent critics as post-Christian interpolations. Even the famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah has been interpreted as the picture of the sufferings of a nation regarded as a person rather than as a forecast of the sufferings of the Messiah. Again, the reference in Haggai to *the Desire of all nations*,[1] which is often alleged to be a description of our Lord, may not even allude to a person at all. It may simply be the prophecy of a time when *the desirable things of all nations* shall fill God's house at Jerusalem with glory. One of the most remarkable of these so-called Messianic prophecies is that contained in the seventh chapter of Isaiah. Ahaz, king of Judah, was threatened by the kings of Syria and of Israel. Isaiah came with a message of comfort and a sign of deliverance. *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold,*—so runs our Authorized Version—*a virgin shall conceive and bare a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* What can be a more exact prophecy

[1] Hag. II. 7.

of Jesus Christ? It tells the very manner of His birth, and it speaks of Him by the most significant of all names—*God-with-us*. But here again we are face to face with difficulties. Does the Hebrew word necessarily mean "virgin"? Probably not. In that case what does the prophet say? Need his words be regarded as alluding to the Incarnation? May they not simply mean that the hope of Israel lay in a Son who should shortly be born of a young woman, and who might be regarded as a pledge that God had not forsaken His nation, but was still with them?

It would be an uninteresting and thankless task to show in detail how the letter of every one of the so-called Messianic prophecies can be explained without any reference to a historical Christ. Arguments which depend for their force upon the exact and minute correspondence of isolated phrases or passages in the Old Testament with certain details in our Lord's life are at best precarious and uncertain. Even if such correspondences could be undoubtedly proved, we should only have demonstrated that certain wonderful forecasts made by men, who could not fully understand what they were saying, were in an equally wonderful manner verified some centuries later. Would such a discovery afford any sure proof of the truth and the

Divine origin of Christianity? Would it not rather be a proof to the contrary? Would it not be a sign that such a religion had but little to do with God? For if we are to judge of God's dealings with men by what His Son told us or by what nature tells us, He does not arrange this world as a huge, lifeless, mechanical puzzle, and then prove the truth of one series of actions by the exactness, at once incomparable and inexplicable, with which such a series—though separated in time or space—exactly fits in with another. On the contrary, the law of God's revelation in the sphere of nature and of human life is, as the best religious and scientific thought of to-day tells us, the law of education and of development. Education is not the implanting of extraordinary pieces of information. Development is not the gift of prediction. Education is rather the drawing out of what is in the man already, and development is gradual transformation of potential into actual existence. If, then, we wish to prove that a religion is true and divine, we must do so by making it clear that such a religion obeys rather than violates the law of God's dealings with us. Now in the case of Christianity we have a religion which claims to have been revealed at a particular period of human history. If it is to make good its claims to be a Divine revelation, it too must be seen to conform to the workings of God in

the world, to be the result of a period of education and of development. The evidence for its Divine origin must be that it exactly answers to, satisfies and realizes the highest aspirations and needs of mankind, which centuries of development and education were ever drawing out into clearer and more pronounced existence.

It is no doubt true that Christianity, because it is a religion based upon the life of Jesus Christ, stands or falls with the truth or falsehood of certain facts in that life. It is also true that there is no lack of historical evidence to attest the genuineness and authenticity of the documents containing the account of His life. Moreover the internal evidence of the records themselves is to many minds clear and convincing. But the final argument for the truth of Christianity does not depend upon the precise amount of evidence which we possess for the birth, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. Such testimony is useful. But the final appeal in every case is this. Does such a religion meet the deepest and most pressing needs of the individual's life and of the life of the nation and the world of which he is a part? If not, however unimpeachable is the evidence for the miraculous conception and for the ascension, however convincingly we can demonstrate that Christ worked wonders and

spake as never man spake ; one thing is certain, Christianity is not the ultimate religion. God has not yet spoken His final Word to the world. Man is still waiting for a revelation of the character of his Maker.

Christianity, indeed, professes to be able entirely to fulfil all the noblest cravings of the individual and of the race to which he belongs. In many cases it has made good its claims. Individuals, and to some extent nations, have owned Christ as their Master, because they have recognized that in Him their whole being has complete satisfaction. When they have yielded to Him, they have tried to demonstrate the truth of His religion by such an argument as this : " Have not you, who refuse to believe in Christ, the same longings and cravings ? Can any other religion account for and satisfy them ? Here they are all explained and satisfied. Believe in Christ, and these things and more besides are yours." But to an argument like this there is a ready reply : " No, we have not exactly the same longings. This religion does not and never will appeal to us in the same way as it does to you. The fact is that you have accepted a religion, which first of all creates cravings which it ultimately satisfies. If you had not been told of Christ, would you ever have felt the least need of any one like Christ ? These cravings, then, of which you speak

are not such as are necessarily characteristic of fully developed human nature. They cannot fairly be termed the deepest needs or highest aspirations of humanity, since they are not the result of a normal evolution of the religious consciousness in man."

There is great force in such a line of argument. It is no doubt a fact that, in some degree at least, Christianity calls forth the very taste by which it is to be appreciated. The more a man knows of Jesus Christ, the more he longs to know. But such a fact is only the result of a psychological law that holds good throughout the whole sphere of human life. There are some mental states and moral cravings so complicated and unintelligible, that a man cannot dare to examine them, nay unconsciously distorts their significance, until he has some dim conception of the possibility, if not of the manner, of their eventual explanation. Hence, a Christian may with some reason argue that those who do not know the explanation in Christ, dare not examine the problem. To know himself, a man must first know Christ.

But such an answer, though true as far as it goes, does not fully meet the case. It may reasonably be urged: "Surely the wants and aspirations of the human heart cannot *all* be created by the revela-

tion of Jesus Christ. If we admit for the sake of argument that some at least could never have been completely developed or expressed, before the explanation, which professes to be final, was accepted; yet if these aspirations are truly human, and if these needs are common to all men (though they know it not), would they not, however confusedly and with whatever contradictions, have been struggling to find expression amongst those who either knew nothing or cared nothing for the details of the life of Christ? Can you prove that they have ever been thus expressed? You will not convince us by simply appealing to the witness of the civilized world to-day. For though you can no doubt point to men who knew little of and cared less for Christ and yet had these same aspirations; though you can prove that many of our thinkers who profess to have nothing in common with historical Christianity are to-day expressing the same cravings which Christianity alone satisfies; yet we reply that those who least acknowledge to themselves or others the fact, may be imperceptibly moulded by the general tone of Christian thought prevalent in the community in which they live. Indeed, so many of the ideals in the philosophy, morality and religion of the civilized world to-day have been directly or indirectly influenced by the Christian ideal, that it has long since become impossible to affirm

whether the ideal is the natural ideal of thinking and religious humanity, or only of that portion of the race which has been dominated by the commanding personality of Jesus of Nazareth. Much less can you convince us by appealing to the testimony of the uncivilized world, or even of those portions of the world where civilization has simply stagnated. For such nations can scarcely be supposed to possess developed intellects and educated religious consciousness. Can you point to any single community which has had these cravings, and has evolved them spontaneously apart from any knowledge of your religion? Then you may prove that the cravings are natural to at least a section of humanity."

Now though I believe that Buddhism to-day might furnish a striking and in many respects a complete answer to such a challenge; yet the best answer will be found by going back to the time before our Lord was born, and by ascertaining the highest hopes of humanity then. If we can do this, we shall see how far Christianity does or does not appeal to real wants, which existed independently of any knowledge of historical details of Christ's life. If it could be shown that in a nation, possessing a remarkably developed religious consciousness, there had gradually been manifested certain strange and imperious cravings, expressed in the pages of its

literature, at first perhaps with some confusion, but at a later period with increasing clearness and importunity, cravings which have never been entirely accounted for and satisfied, save by the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth—this would be strong evidence to the fact that Christianity is God's final revelation of Himself.

In the present essay I propose to examine some of these cravings, these deepest thoughts of men whom all admit to be leaders of religious life in a nation which of all the ancient nations of the world is allowed to have possessed the greatest "genius for religion". I propose to examine the needs and the aspirations of some of the prophets of Israel. I shall show the nature of such needs, the occasions which called them forth, the extent to which they were satisfied before the birth of Jesus Christ, and the manner in which He claims to explain, to satisfy and to develop them. I shall not be concerned with a discussion of isolated passages, which present a striking resemblance to details in our Lord's life. Without denying that there are passages which may refer to such details and which perhaps can thus be best explained (for in the providence of God many an event—how much more the Supreme Event?—casts a shadow before it comes), I am convinced that the evidential value of prophecy primarily lies in the fact that it expresses longings natural to the

most religious of all nations. These longings are only partially realized without the knowledge of Christ, but are fully explained and illuminated by the teaching and work of our Lord, if He be what He claimed to be at once the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Before I examine their writings, let me say a few words as to the language and inspiration of the Prophets. I regard their language not as mere Eastern metaphor and symbolism, but as the natural outcome of a deep religious experience, which expresses itself sometimes in prose and sometimes in poetry. It uses such language because it alone at the moment can best embody the soul of the man. Each prophet was a man struggling to express himself clearly and truthfully, contending with the mysterious limitations which language imposes upon human thought. On the subject of Inspiration I have no theory to offer. I am content to accept the prophet's own explanation as to the origin of all that was best in him, that it was the word of Jehovah which came to him. The more I have studied the works of the prophets, the more have I become convinced that they were practical men, and that they were doing their best to understand the significance of the present, and not merely predicting a distant future. The prophets differed from religious

teachers to-day, inasmuch as they were more practical and clear-sighted. They saw more of the meaning and results of sin, more of the life and the goodness of God. And if many of the prophecies have a significance which transcends the events of the prophet's own age, it is due to the fact that he who accurately describes the present is describing the eternal. For all history is of a piece, and the man who understands the laws of one period of history understands the laws of all history. He who sees the requirements of his own time, sees the requirements of all time. For what is history but the realization of the thought of a single Being? By an inevitable law therefore, in describing the present, a man goes beyond the present, he comes upon the eternal, the absolute, the I AM, that holds together and alone gives unity to what was, what is, and what is to be.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEMANDS OF AMOS AND HOSEA.

We propose to examine in order some of the most characteristic demands of the religious consciousness as they are expressed in the writings which bear the names of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Amos lived in the eighth century before Christ. Though himself a native of Judah, he was sent to prophesy to Israel. Such aspirations as he embodies are not the result of a lengthy religious or philosophical education in the schools: they are rather the outcome of the simple training of a thoughtful and serious man. *I am no prophet*, he says, *and I am not a prophet's son*—that is, I am not a member of the Prophetical Schools—*but I am an herdsman and a dresser of sycomore trees; and Jehovah took me from behind the flock, and Jehovah said to me; Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.*[1] Any of the thoughts then which we meet with in this prophet are of such a kind as we may

[1] Amos VII. 14, 15.

presume to be in some degree intelligible even to the less cultured classes of the Jewish nation.

What then are these thoughts? What is the fundamental teaching of Amos? Of two great realities this Hebrew shepherd was intensely conscious: the one was his nation, the other his nation's God. The nation was to Amos a being who had entered,[1] and who would enter[2] into close personal relations with Jehovah, whose one sin consisted in failing to recognize the true significance[3] and moral responsibilities[4] of such relationship. Amos has scarcely any message to individuals as such, but he has an important message to the nation. *Prepare*, said he, *to meet thy God, O Israel.*[5] The other reality was the existence of Jehovah. He was sure that He had revealed Himself in a special manner to Israel. Yet he could not limit His working to Israel. He was the God of all history and of all nations.[6] The result of Israel's connexion with Jehovah would but increase the nation's responsibilities. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.*[7]

As Amos realized at once the nearness of God to the nation, and the distance of the nation from God, he became convinced that the time must soon

[1] Amos III. 2. [2] IV. 12. [3] II. 12. [4] II. 6. [5] IV. 12.
[6] I. 3-II. 3; IX. 7, 8. [7] III. 2.

come when the God, who was so close, would manifest His presence. Men around him were longing for what they called the Day of Jehovah;[1] they were expecting a fuller revelation of their God. Amos felt that the phrase they were using glibly and thoughtlessly expressed an awful truth. Such a day must be at hand, though a day which should be as black as night[2] to those who put light for darkness, and darkness for light. As surely as day followed night, so surely would the Source of all light be seen, and the night of moral confusion end, and Jehovah Himself appear. We are not now concerned with the means by which Amos arrived at such a belief, with its strange likeness and still more strange unlikeness to the belief of those around him. We are simply concerned with the fact that one who is admitted to have been a great religious teacher seven centuries before the time of Christ was unable to interpret the history of his own time, unless the events in it were signs of a day in which Jehovah would be more fully revealed. Such a revelation Amos plainly saw would involve the ruin and punishment of the ungodly in Israel; and yet (if we accept the latter portion of his book—IX. 9-15—as the work of the prophet himself) he expected the ultimate restoration of the true members of the nation[3] and of the old popular monarchy,[4] a

[1] Amos v. 18. [2] v. 20. [3] IX. 14, 15. [4] IX. 11.

restoration in which nature itself would sympathize.[1]

We shall see in our study of other prophets that the conception of the unity of his nation was not peculiar to Amos, but that it was characteristic of the whole of Hebrew prophecy. For the present it will be sufficient to observe that any religion which professes to satisfy the deepest wants of humanity must explain how an admittedly great religious teacher could believe in the corporate unity of his nation, and could be convinced that such a nation had a moral responsibility of its own. It must also either fulfil or point to the ultimate fulfilment of the larger hopes which Amos entertained for his nation's future. For though we may regard his expectation of the coming of Jehovah's Day as in part realized by the work of judgment performed by Assyria, can any one who reads the last five verses of the prophet[2] in the light of the future return of Judah from exile, believe that any such event could meet the inmost cravings of the prophet for the bringing again of *the captivity of my people Israel?*

A religion which is to be the religion of humanity

[1] Amos IX. 13.

[2] If these verses are not the work of Amos himself, they may be regarded as expressing the longings of another, although somewhat later, prophet.

must explain the meaning of a nation's unity and of the hopes which centred round the particular nation of Israel. But it must do more besides. For as we pass from Amos to a slightly later prophet, we meet with new yearnings, which in turn demand an explanation, satisfaction and development.

There are few more touching books in literature than the book of the prophet Hosea. What modern writer has told with a like accuracy and pathos the mystery of human love? The man was drawn towards one who was unworthy of him, one whom he could not abandon when she had abandoned him, one whom he, for a time at least, attracted home again by the undying constancy of love. From short, disjointed, passionate utterances, from silence more pathetic than words, we see in some measure the depth of his affection for his wife and the intensity of his loathing for her sins. And yet amidst his unspeakable wretchedness, of one fact he was certain. However false the object of his love proved, the relation into which he had entered was a sacred one, not one chosen merely by his own self-will. His love for her, although he must long have known part at least of the misery it would involve, was, he was sure, a Divine love. *Jehovah*, he says, as he attempts to write his own life, but will not at once trust himself to speak in the first person, *Jehovah said unto Hosea: Go, take to thee a wife of*

whoredom and children of whoredom.[1] He obeyed Jehovah's command, and by the most painful experience which a man can undergo, he gradually learnt the lesson which unsatisfied love upon earth is intended to teach. He realized that relationships here are a type of relationships elsewhere, that affection below is derived from affection above, that the union of husband and wife is typical of another and more mysterious union. Critics may try to separate the parts of the prophecy referring to Hosea's own life and the parts referring to his nation's life. They scarcely can be separated. The fact is that the moment Hosea began to enter into the mystery of love, he was led out of himself into a profounder mystery—the mystery of the love of Jehovah for his nation. His own intense yearning for her whom he loved interpreted to him the yearning of God for His people.

The land doth commit great whoredom, going away from Jehovah. . . . Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife and I am not her husband, and let her put away her whoredom from her face and her adulteries from between her breasts. . . . She said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool, and my flax, mine oil and my drinks. . . . For she did not know that it

[1] Hosea I. 2.

was I who gave to her the corn and the new wine and the oil, and multiplied silver to her and gold, which they made into the Baal.[1]

But not only did he learn that the relationship of husband and wife was a symbol of a greater mystery; he was made to feel that the relationship of parent and child was the same. Jehovah had felt the same affection towards his nation, as a father towards his young son. *When Israel was a boy I loved him; and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . And it was I that taught Ephraim to go.*[2]

Thus Hosea, in entering into the troubles of his own life, was led out and beyond them into what he must have thought of as the troubles of the life of Jehovah. The fact that man was made in the image of God was to him no barren dogma, but a truth which was interpreted by, and in turn interpreted the contradictions and perplexities of his existence. We shall not here discuss the similarity and difference of his conception of Jehovah's marriage with Israel and the popular conception of a nation's marriage with its God. The one had a moral, the other a physical basis. It is enough for us to have shown that one of the great teachers of Israel believed such a mystical marriage to be the one reality upon which he must base his message

[1] Hosea I. 2; II. 2, 5, 8. [2] XI. 1, 3.

to his people. Now a religion which claims to explain and to meet the deepest convictions and needs of man must tell us what truth it was which Hosea was trying to express, when he spoke of Jehovah as the husband and father of a particular nation. It must tell us how human relationships can be types of a Divine relationship, how love upon earth even when unreturned is an image of love in heaven.

I have said that such a religion must interpret the hopes of his nation's future which Amos entertained; it must interpret those of Hosea as well. Amos looked for the destruction of sinners and the subsequent prosperity of the rest of the nation. But Hosea saw that more was required. The nation itself must die and rise again. *Come*, said he, *and let us return unto Jehovah, for he hath torn and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he cause us to live, on the third day will he raise us up and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah; His going out is as sure as dawn, and he will come to us as the rain, as latter rain watering the earth.*[1]

The nation's death in the captivity that followed in some measure perhaps fulfilled this prophecy; but

[1] Hosea VI. 1-3.

did the nation ever really rise again? Was the yearning of the prophet that Israel should know Jehovah satisfied? If not, Christianity must explain how that yearning arose; and it must explain how it has been, or may be, fulfilled.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

Hosea will be accused by some critics of degrading the conception of the Deity by attributing to it human feelings and passions. The truth is that, so far from lowering our idea of God, he was raising it by changing it from an abstraction into a living reality. At the same time he was elevating our conception of humanity by showing us that the relationships of earth are not human inventions, but Divine mysteries. But even if such a charge could be proved against Hosea, as we turn to another prophet and read, in his own words, an account of his call to be Jehovah's minister; we see that some at least of these Hebrew teachers maintained, as firmly as any school of religious thought to-day, the profound difference which necessarily exists between infinite God and finite man. *In the year of the death of king Uzziah, I saw the Lord . . . and I said: Woe is me! Surely I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a*

people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King Jehovah Sabaoth.[1]

Throughout Isaiah's prophecies we find that he regarded God as separated alike by His perfection and absolute power from human beings;[2] and that he never forgot the lesson which he learnt when he first saw God, that human authority is but the suggestion of another authority, that though *king Uzziah* died, He from whom Uzziah derived his power, *the King Jehovah* lived on eternally. Hosea learnt in his own home life that the relationships of husband and wife, of father and son, were reflections of Divine relationships. Isaiah, in the larger life of the state, was taught that the relationship in which an earthly ruler stood towards his people was also a suggestion of another and of a higher relationship.

A terrible commission was given to the prophet when he saw God. He was commanded to deliver a message which would not only be rejected, but itself be the instrument of the hardening of the nation. In reply to his question, *How long?* he was told that the nation was like a terebinth or oak, which might, indeed, be cut down, but which still had a stock remaining to send forth new shoots.[3] The holy seed was the stock. Here we touch

[1] Isaiah VI. 1, 5.

[2] Cf. VI. 3; X. 15; XXXVII. 23. [3] VI. 11, 13.

upon a great prophetical message of Isaiah, which only, perhaps, took a practical expression at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war—the message of the immortality of the remnant of the nation. The nation, or rather the remnant which alone deserved that name, was divine. Jehovah might, indeed, remove men far away, He might increase the deserted places of the land, and the tenth part of the nation even then remaining might be exterminated; but the stock, the stump of the tree of national life came from Jehovah, and would remain.[1]

Such was the teaching of Isaiah when he began his work as a prophet. But he was to learn yet deeper lessons. A national crisis would bring out what was in the man.

Syria and Israel had attacked Judah. Ahaz, the reigning king of Judah, was an unworthy descendant of David. He was on the point of concluding an alliance with the Assyrian empire, because he relied more upon the power of a monstrous Asiatic tyranny than upon the unseen strength of God. Isaiah was sent to remind him of the true source of the nation's strength and perpetuity. His son *Shear-Jashub*, whose very name (by interpretation, *a remnant shall return*) was a witness to the perpetuity of national life, accompanied the prophet. Isaiah gave his message, and

[1] Isaiah VI. 12, 13.

offered to confirm its truth by a sign. *Ask thee*, he said to Ahaz, *a sign of Jehovah thy God.*[1] The king did not want a sign; he was more interested in help from a visible potentate than in signs from an invisible and offended God. *Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put Jehovah to the test.*[2] But Isaiah gave him a sign, whether he wished it or not. His policy, as the prophet plainly told him, would prove suicidal. It was as though a mouse asked the help of a lion. Assyria instead of assisting Judah would make her a vassal, and use her country as a battle-ground between Egypt and herself.[3] The land of Judah would be desolated, and the few inhabitants who were left would be compelled to live upon the simplest food, the barest necessities of life; *for curds and honey shall every one eat who is left in the midst of the land.*[4] And yet, though the desolation was coming, and coming quickly, Jehovah had not forgotten His land and would assuredly protect it from the immediate danger which threatened it. To confirm his message, Isaiah gave the king a twofold sign.

The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a young woman[5] *is with child, and shall bring forth a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Curds and honey shall he eat*, for he shall share in the

[1] Isaiah VII. 11. [2] VII. 12. [3] VII. 17-25.
[4] VII. 22. [5] or *damsel.*

general poverty and distress of his nation. Let Ahaz therefore know that the desolation which must follow his accursed policy was no distant dream, but a judgment which would come in the lifetime of this child. The judgment was not even a whole generation away, for the child should be born ere a year had passed. Nay, it should come even sooner. It should come as soon as the boy was old enough to distinguish between good and bad. *Curds and honey shall he eat when he shall know how to reject the evil and choose the good.* But, thank God! the deliverance from immediate danger should come even sooner. *For before the boy shall know how to reject the evil and choose the good, the land at whose two kings thou fearest horribly, shall be deserted.*[1]

Thus the first part of the sign tells of the distress of the nation which would result from the folly of Ahaz; the second part tells of the still nearer doom of Syria and Israel, who were opposing Ahaz. The two phases in the nation's history should be reflected in the life of a little boy. When Heaven lay about him in his infancy, God would be helping and saving his nation. As "shades of the prison-house" began "to close upon the growing boy," the gloom of captivity would envelop the land of his fathers. The light and the darkness—

[1] Isaiah VII. 14-16.

present salvation and future punishment—would seem to the worldly king Ahaz the work of two different Gods, or the result of two different moods on the part of the same God. But this sign, if he would deign to study it, would show that such was not the case. A beautiful link of connexion between two periods in the national history was given to him—the growing life of a little boy—a boy whose "days" were "bound each to each by natural piety". When deliverance came, the child would be too young to understand what it meant: when punishment came, he would, to his sorrow, have begun to realize the meaning of sin in the world.[1] But alike at all times, in the happiness or misery of his own and his nation's life, the boy, as his very name testified, would be a living sign of the presence of God coming near to men. He would be a proof that they derived the bitter and the sweet from one single changeless Being.

I do not know who was the particular child of whom Isaiah was speaking. But one thing at least is certain. The sign given to Ahaz was intended as a pledge that God, even when He seemed farthest away, was yet coming close to the people. And the proof that this was so was the birth of a child into the world, whose very name was a witness to the truth of the union of God with His

[1] VII. 15, 16.

nation. For the child should be called *Immanuel*, which is by interpretation *God is with us.*

The sign left a deep impression upon Isaiah. As we see later,[1] the very thought of that name was to him a pledge that the tide of Assyrian conquest, though it swept through the land, should not bear away the whole people. *Behold the Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river mighty and great. . . . And it shall mount over all its channels and go over all its banks, and shall sweep along into Judah, shall overflow and pass over and shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of its wings shall fill the breadth of thy land—O Immanuel.* The name of the country is Immanuel's land ; and the moment he utters the name, he changes his tone. He feels the inevitable doom of material forces when mustered against a land protected by and united with an invisible power. He ends a triumphant defiance of the enemy with the words : *Gird yourselves, but ye shall break down : Gird yourselves, but ye shall break down. Devise a device and it shall come to naught ; speak a word, but it shall not stand, for—Immanuel,* that is, *God is with us.*

Thus we see, without entering into the disputed question as to who the child was, that in a great crisis of his nation's history, when its doom seemed

[1] Isaiah VIII. 7-10.

to be sealed, when it would appear to be destined to be annihilated by Assyria, after its Davidic monarchy (now so ignobly represented) had first been overthrown by Syria and Israel; Isaiah was led to believe in the continued existence of that nation. This existence in no way depended upon the success of the political projects of Ahaz or upon the strength of the nation's military organization, but solely upon the presence of God in its midst—"a presence which is not to be put by". The child, if he did not himself unite God and men, would be the pledge of the possibility of the union of Jehovah with a section of humanity—a sign that *God* was *with* His people Israel. Every infant born into a race bound by covenant to God is, in some sense, an Immanuel to that race. Each fresh birth is a pledge that God has not forgotten the race, that He is coming close to it, that He is, as it were, giving a portion of His own life to it, that it may continue its existence. But this child, born, as Isaiah expected him to be, at a time when thoughtful and religious men might well believe that man was forsaken by God, seemed to bring God closer than ever before, and to make that unseen presence an awful reality.

Isaiah's prophecy was doubtless fulfilled, and the child born within a year. Yet, as we read these two chapters, the question occurs again and again

whether this child when born could entirely have satisfied the cravings of his heart; nay, whether the birth of any merely human child, whoever he might be, could have been an infallible pledge in the midst of so much that pointed to the contrary that God had not forsaken His people, that He was still with them. If no merely human child could satisfy his cravings, why did the prophet make use of such language?

There is another prophecy of Isaiah which was called forth by the same crisis in his nation's history. It is contained in the ninth chapter of his book.[1] He has described the dark judgments of God, which Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian King, executed upon northern Palestine. But as he looks at the gloomy and wretched country, he sees a light breaking: *The people that walk in darkness see a great light; the dwellers in the land of deadly shade —light shineth brilliantly upon them.*

The light is caused by the birth of a child: *For a child is born unto us, a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name is called wonderful Counsellor, God the Mighty One, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there is no end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, in establishing it and supporting it by justice and by*

[1] Isaiah IX. 2, 6, 7.

righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The jealousy of Jehovah will perform this.

Isaiah here sees a child who still more closely connected heaven and earth. Not only should he bring order and security to the country, but he himself should apparently share in the highest prerogatives of the Divine King. It is true that every king was a symbol and type of an eternal King, and every child that was born, every son that was given, came from and shared in the life of the Supreme. Yet it is a question how far such a sacred name as that which Isaiah gave this king, a child born of David's line, could be applicable to any merely human monarch, how such a monarch could be called by a monotheist, *God the Mighty One.*

Again Isaiah describes in a prophecy[1] of uncertain date the rule of this king of the line of David: *And there shall come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And there shall rest upon him the spirit of Jehovah, the spirit of wisdom and discernment, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.*

In his days a reign of perfect peace and order shall set in which can only be described in words like these: *And the wolf shall lodge with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf*

[1] Isaiah XI. 1, 2, 6, 9.

and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little boy shall lead them. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall have become full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

This prophecy was undoubtedly fulfilled in the reign of a good king like Hezekiah or Josiah. Jehovah's spirit rested upon these kings, and the land, during part of their reigns, shared in that security of which the prophet spoke. Yet it was not, we feel, entirely fulfilled by them.[1] For Isaiah, as he sketched the portrait of such a king from David's line, was sketching the portrait of another King also. He was forced beyond the immediate person whom he tried to describe. In painting his character, he was painting another besides. And in doing so, he was obeying no mystic rules of Hebrew prophecy, but a law of common life. For no one who loves and admires another can describe such a man save in superlatives, in well-nigh extravagant epithets. Why? Because man is made in God's image, and the better a man is the more he reflects that image; the more he leads you away from himself to the original, the sooner you forget the man and begin to describe the God who made him, and who is in him. Every quality in man

[1] Isaiah XI. 10-16 can scarcely have had any fulfilment in such reigns.

suggests a quality in God: every quality in God is found only in the superlative degree. We need not altogether wonder then that Isaiah, as he pictured the good king's reign, was led away from the earthly to the heavenly King, from Hezekiah or Josiah to Jehovah Sabaoth. And yet we do wonder, and we cannot help feeling that Isaiah would have been the last to admit that this explanation—satisfactory as far as it goes—was final. He would have told us that he was not merely describing a Divine King, but he was thinking of an actual human king: not simply of Jehovah, but of a man reigning by Jehovah's grace. The question then remains. If Hezekiah and Josiah could not fully realize this description, and if Isaiah was assured that it would be realized here on earth by an actual king of David's line, who was that king? A religion, which claims to realize the highest hopes of that most religious of all races, the Hebrew race, must give an answer to that question. It must show how such a reign is accompanied not by temporal nor by spiritual blessings alone, but by both together—by the spirit of Jehovah and the redemption of nature.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

THE next group of prophecies which we shall examine are those contained in the last twenty-seven chapters of the book which bears Isaiah's name. The writer of them asserts, perhaps more strongly than any other, the majesty, the holiness, the incomparableness of God. God is not and cannot be made in the likeness of men. *To whom then will ye liken God? and what likeness will ye compare unto him? . . . to whom then will ye liken me that I may be equal to him? saith the Holy One.*[1]

Yet no prophet more clearly maintains that God can enter into close relations with mankind. Even a heathen king is spoken of as Jehovah's *anointed one.*[2] His right hand is said to have been grasped by God Himself. But there is another being with whom God enters into yet more intimate relations. The interest of the prophecy is rightly felt to centre, not upon Cyrus, but upon some one who is called Jehovah's Servant.

[1] Isaiah XL. 18, 25; cf. XLVI. 5. [2] XLV. 1.

Who is this Servant? Perhaps we cannot do better than follow the course of the prophet's thought as he has himself expressed it, and learn from him who he was. Let us ask the prophet to speak for himself, trying as far as possible not to prejudge the question by assumptions of what we think that he ought, or ought not to have thought and said. He is first mentioned by name in the forty-first chapter: *Thou Israel my Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my lover . . . thou art my Servant, I have chosen and not rejected thee.*[1]

Here, undoubtedly, the prophet speaks of the nation of Israel as Jehovah's Servant. The next mention of the Servant is in the forty-second chapter. It runs thus: *Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul is well pleased. I have put my spirit upon him.*[2]

After describing the "sweet reasonableness" with which he shall accomplish his life-work, the prophet concludes with these words: *I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, that I may take hold of thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations; to open blind eyes, to bring out captives from prison, those that sit in darkness from the house of restraint.*[3]

Here we see that Jehovah's Servant has a work

[1] Isaiah XLI. 8, 9. [2] XLII. 1. [3] XLII. 6, 7.

to do in the Gentile world. Israel is to be an instrument in the education and enlightenment of other lands. As the prophet has not said anything to the contrary, we may presume that the Servant is still the nation of Israel, though as one phrase at least—*I will give thee for a covenant of the people*,[1] where the word *people* may itself refer to Israel—seems to imply, the prophet is being taught that the duties and privileges of Jehovah's service are only fully understood by the stock or remnant of that nation. The whole of Israel is called to be a Servant, but not all Israel obeys the call.

A moment later the prophet sees this fact with even greater clearness. His nation did not claim its mission. Instead of being *for a light of the nations*, the light that was in it had become darkness, and how great was the darkness! *Who is blind but my Servant, and deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he that is devoted to me, yea, blind as Jehovah's Servant? Thou hast seen many things, but thou observest not; he openeth his ears, but he heareth not.*[2]

It is plain, then, that the Servant must first heal himself. He must cast out the beam out of his own eye, if he would see clearly to cast out the mote out of the eyes of others. He has a work to do in his own nation, before he goes to the Gentile world. He

[1] Isaiah XLII. 6. [2] XLII. 19, 20.

must persuade the whole nation that they really are what he is, and what he is claiming to be—Jehovah's Servant. For not all Israel is the true Israel: not all that are called by the name of Servant do the work of a servant. And in those who have been called, and do not obey the call, that which should have been light has turned to darkness. We find this twofold work of the Servant clearly stated at a later period. We hear Jehovah speaking to his Servant:

And he said to me: Thou art my servant, even Israel with whom I will beautify myself.

But I said: It is in vain that I have laboured. For nought and for a breath have I spent my strength, but surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my recompense with my God.

Then Jehovah tells the Servant the nature of his work: *It is too light a thing that thou art my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; so I appoint thee the light of the nations, to be my salvation unto the end of the world.*[1]

But the work of salvation is hard, and the task of converting one's own kinsmen the hardest of all. Therefore we are not surprised when either the servant himself, or one who appears to have been

[1] Isaiah XLIX. 3, 4, 6.

intrusted with no very different mission, states the result of his efforts in such language as this:

The Lord Jehovah hath opened my ear, and I have not been rebellious; I have not turned backward. My back have I given to smiters, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the hair; my face have I not hidden from confusion and spitting. But the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore am I not confounded: therefore have I made my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.[1]

The speaker is learning that God's work can only be done through suffering, and that trouble brings a man close to, and makes him dependent upon God Himself. Thus also the nation (if indeed the speaker be not the nation) is gradually taught a like lesson. For the prophet sees that the work of the Servant of Jehovah, which seemed so glorious and attractive at first—the work of spreading the light of God through the world—can only be accomplished by intense suffering. This suffering was rendered more acute by the fact that the nature and purpose of it were misunderstood, not merely by the Gentile world, but by those who were themselves the Servant of Jehovah, if they could only recognize the fact. So, by degrees, the prophet enters into the mystery of pain. He learns his lesson by forgetting himself and

[1] Isaiah L. 5-7.

studying his nation, or rather that which alone deserved the title of nation—the Servant of Jehovah.

Behold, he says, *my Servant shall prosper, he shall be high and exalted, and exceedingly lofty.*[1]

But he who shall be high and exalted bears traces of super-human pain : his visage was so marred that it was not human, and his form no longer that of the sons of men. The tale of what the Servant has suffered passes all belief : *Who believed that which we* prophets *have heard? And the arm of Jehovah, unto whom was it manifested?*[2]

The Servant, says the prophet, *grew up before Jehovah as a young shoot* from that national stock which appeared half dead, *and as a root from a parched ground*[3] which seemed too dry to bear anything at all. But the shoot, when it came, was wholly unattractive. *He had no form nor majesty, and when we saw him there was no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and deserted of men, a man of pains and acquainted with sickness : and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we regarded him not.*[4]

Thus far the sufferings of the Servant resemble those of the nameless speaker in the fiftieth chapter. But as the prophet forgets his natural feelings of repugnance, and gazes upon the sickly form, from which men turned away in loathing, a great truth sud-

[1] Isaiah LII. 13. [2] LIII. 1. [3] LIII. 2. [4] LIII. 2, 3.

denly dawns upon him. The sufferings of that figure upon which he is gazing are the salvation of the whole body of which he is a member. Those who claim their position as Jehovah's Servant are working out the redemption of those who have that position, but refuse to claim it. For all the nation is one, and the sorrows of the part are the sorrows of the whole. If one suffer, all suffer ; one and all have a common life. *But, surely*, he cries in surprise, *surely it is our sicknesses that he bore, and our pains that he carried*,[1] and we, instead of recognizing the fact, were moralizing on the punishment as being suitable and divinely ordered: *And we regarded him as stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But* the truth was that *he was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities, the punishment of our peace was upon him, and through his stripes have we been healed.* For we all needed healing : *All we like a flock did go astray, we turned everyone to his own way : and Jehovah caused to fall upon him the iniquity of us all.*[2]

Then by degrees he sees that this sickness and grief are voluntary ; that it is renunciation, self-sacrifice upon which he is gazing—the "self" of the servant entering into and purifying the "self" of the nation—renunciation which is the result of

[1] Isaiah LIII. 4. [2] LIII. 4-6.

super-human self-restraint. *He was oppressed*[1]—driven like a slave, as the whole nation had been in Egypt by cruel taskmasters—*he was oppressed, yet he let himself be humbled, and he opened not his mouth; as the sheep that is led to the slaughter, and as an ewe that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. Through oppressive judgment he was taken away.*[2]

Such sufferings might melt a heart of iron; but they failed to touch the sensibilities of the faithless and stubborn generation which witnessed them: "*As for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living*, or who thought to himself that it was *for the rebellion of my* own *people he was stricken.* So he died and was buried: *his grave was made with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; although he had done no injustice, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*[3]

He died, and no man laid it to heart. No man perceived what it meant. None considered the purpose of his life and death. But the prophet was entering into their meaning. He was catching a glimpse of the mystery of pain. He was learning that it was no unhappy fate, no mere combination of unfortunate circumstances, which weighed the sufferer down. It was part of a Divine purpose.

[1] The Hebrew root is the same as that found in Ex. III. 7.

[2] Isaiah LIII. 7, 8. [3] LIII. 8, 9.

It pleased Jehovah to crush him: He hath made him sick. And he tells us the purpose : *If his soul shall make an offering for guilt, he shall see a seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.*[1]

He, being dead, shall see: he, though buried, shall live. The purpose shall be worked out, and the sufferer shall be satisfied. *After the travail of his soul, he shall see—he shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my Servant, make the many righteous, aud he shall take up the load of their iniquities.*[2]

And he shall be rewarded. *Therefore will I give him a portion, and with the powerful shall he divide the spoil, because he poured out his soul unto death, and let himself be numbered with the transgressors. And he bore the sin of many, and for the transgressors made intercession.*[3]

We have said before that when a man would describe a character that he loves, he must needs use language which rises above the individual to the God Who made him and is in him : for human beauty and goodness are shadows of a Beauty and Goodness elsewhere. In like manner, if a man would enter into the sufferings of an individual or of a nation, he must enter into others yet more awful and mysterious. The prophet in describing

[1] Isaiah LIII. 10. [2] LIII. 11. [3] LIII. 12.

human grief was led beyond human grief. Trouble brought him near to God; and the sorrow he told of was more than human.

It is more than human, and yet it was human. The sufferer is clearly a human being. For the prophet is describing no fictitious ideal, but a reality —one whom he could see with his eyes, one who was enduring part at least of the torture he was narrating. And if we ask who such an one was, the prophet replies *Jehovah's Servant:* and if we ask who this Servant is, the prophet has already told us: "My nation is his Servant. Those who claim to be what we all are—the Servant of Jehovah —must suffer for the whole body." The misery of those who realized their position was bringing salvation to all; for the whole nation was one. But in reading the tale of misery, who but feels that the prophet would have been ill content with any such fulfilment of his words as the sufferings of the nation afforded? What members of the nation ever fully realized their position as Jehovah's Servant? Did any ever *let himself be humbled* to the extent of which the prophet spoke: *As the sheep that is led to the slaughter, and as an ewe that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth?* Jeremiah fulfilled part of his words: *And I was,* he says, *as a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter.*[1]

[1] Jer. xi. 19.

He was *despised and deserted of men:* but when he opens his mouth, we hear at times such words as these: *Cursed be the day wherein I was born.*[1] What man, what body of men, ever consented passively to indignities so great; and, though apparently perfect in themselves, were content to suffer for the sake of others? Could the prophet have said of any merely human being: *He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities?*

I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, of his nation alone, *or of some other?*[2]

The figure of the Servant is thought by some to be found again in the sixty-first chapter. The speaker at the beginning of that chapter claims the same Divine inspiration as we have been told that the Servant possessed. *The spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted, hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the eyes to them that are bound, to proclaim an acceptable year of Jehovah, and a day of vengeance of our God.*[3] Did any prophet, priest or king, did Israel or the elect of Israel ever fully accomplish these words?

Before we leave the latter part of the book of

[1] Jer. XX. 14. [2] Acts VIII. 34. [3] Isaiah LXI. 1, 2.

Isaiah, we will mention two other prophecies contained in the sixty-third and sixty-fourth chapters.

In the first of these prophecies we see before us the form of a conqueror returning from battle. The prophet does not say, perhaps he does not know, who the conqueror is. Nay, he seems to turn round and ask us the question, as though he scarcely dare ask it of the warrior himself: *Who is this?* He asks a question, which we cannot answer; but as he asks it, a reply comes from the lips of the warrior, revealing his work and character, but not his name. *Who is this that is coming from Edom, in bright red garments from Bozrah?*[1] *this that is majestic in his raiment, tossing his head in the mightiness of his power? I am one that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*

Since his words are righteous and his work salvation, the prophet, though he knows not his name, no longer fears to address him: *Why is there red on thy raiment, and thy garments like his that treadeth in the wine-press?* The answer comes back. *The wine trough have I trodden alone, and of the peoples there was no man with me, so I trode them in mine anger and trampled them in my fury and their life-stream besprinkled my garments, and*

[1] Isaiah LXIII. 1. Edom in the mind of the prophet was probably associated with the idea of "redness," and Bozrah with the thought of "vintage".

all my raiment have I defiled. For a day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of release was come. And I looked, but there was no helper, and was astonished, but there was no supporter; therefore mine arm wrought salvation for me, and my fury—it supported me. And I stamped upon the people in my anger, and made them drunk in my fury, and spilled their life-stream on the ground.[1]

Who is this speaker? He must be a human conqueror; for his garments are red in the blood of his foes.[2] He must be human, but can he be no more than human—he that refuses his name, and claims to be one who speaks in righteousness, mighty to save?

Thou seemest human and divine.

The other prophecy follows immediately afterwards, and I am inclined to connect it with the one which we have been considering. It tells us where true salvation is alone to be found: *So* Jehovah *became to them a Saviour.* But it tells us more besides. If we may trust the reading which we have adopted, the prophet answers that

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven.

In all their distress, he says, *He was distressed, and*

[1] Isaiah LXIII. 2-6.

[2] The red is probably not the red dress of a soldier (cf. Nah. II. 3), because it specially attracts the prophet's attention.

the angel of His face saved them. In His love and in His mercy He Himself released them.[1]

No wonder that we find him crying to Jehovah: *Look from heaven . . . for thou art our father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us; thou O Jehovah art our father.*[2] And with the thought of Jehovah as the Father of the nation comes the yearning for a fuller revelation of His power: *Oh that thou hadst rent the heavens, that thou hadst come down.*[3] But Jehovah did not come down, and without Him the state of the nation was hopeless: *And we all became as one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds as a menstruous garment.*[4]

Yet in spite of all the prophet is certain that the relationship remains unchanged, that God is still a Father.

And now Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay and thou art our potter, and the work of thy hands are we all.[5]

Were these thoughts that the sorrows of earth are the sorrows of heaven, these yearnings that heaven itself might be rent asunder, this certainty that sin could not destroy the unchanging Fatherhood of God, but the idle dream "of an empty day," or were they founded on fact? Was their truth to be proved and developed?

[1] Isaiah LXIII. 8, 9. [2] LXIII. 15, 16.
[3] LXIV. 1. [4] LXIV. 6. [5] LXIV. 8.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEMANDS OF JEREMIAH.

Few religious teachers have been more unlike one another than Jeremiah and Isaiah. The one was a strong politician, a preacher of God and of Righteousness. The other was a priest, who was by nature sensitive, nervous and retiring. Nor were the messages they delivered the same. Isaiah's was a call to fight, Jeremiah's to yield. If then we find, in spite of these differences, that both teachers arrived at the same results, that both alike were convinced of the fact of their nation's unity, and of its perpetuity and destiny, that both alike believed that God and Israel would some day enter into closer relations than they had yet enjoyed, whilst even then they were more closely united than most of the nation imagined; we shall have evidence for assuming that such aspirations were common to the best Hebrew life and thought, and not the idiosyncrasies of individuals developed under stress of peculiar circumstances.

Jeremiah, like Hosea, knew the meaning of love.

He had an intense shrinking from loneliness and isolation, a longing for human sympathy, and a tender affection for his nation.

Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to all the earth.[1]

O that my head were waters and mine eye a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.[2]

Thou didst entice me, Jehovah, and I was enticed: thou wast stronger than I and didst prevail: I became a laughing-stock all the day; everyone mocketh me.[3]

Cursed be the day wherein I was born: the day wherein my mother bare me—let it not be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, there is born to thee a man child; making him glad indeed.[4]

As we read these passages, we feel that what such a writer says concerning his religious aspirations has an unusual interest; for a man who could speak thus was not one who glibly made use of current religious phrases. He did not scruple to give vent to his inmost longings and fears. He gives us no commonplaces or rhetorical embellishments, but a picture of real life.

The central truth of his life was *God is with us.*

[1] Jer. xv. 10. [2] ix. 1. [3] xx. 7. [4] xx. 14, 15.

This was his fundamental belief. The reality of the union of Jehovah with His people alone interpreted his lonely life and made existence endurable. But he was led to realize and express this truth in the manner not of Isaiah, but of Hosea. His message to Jerusalem began with these words: *Thus saith Jehovah: I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.*[1] Israel's sin, he was assured, consisted in *playing the harlot: Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers.*[2] Even if Israel and Judah both disown the relationship which unites them to Jehovah, it is not for that reason annulled. Jehovah still owns it. *Come back*, are the words addressed to Israel, *O backsliding children, saith Jehovah, for I am a husband to you.*[3]

The children not only of Israel, but of Judah also listen to the call.[4] Israel's voice is heard weeping on the bare mountain tops; and again the call is repeated: *Come back, O backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings.* Israel makes answer: *Behold, we are come to thee: for thou art Jehovah, our God.*[5] The return of the nation to Jehovah is the return of a wife to her husband; but it is more besides. It is the return of a child to its parent. *Wilt thou not from this time cry to me, My Father,*

[1] Jer. II. 2. [2] II. 20. III. 1. [3] III. 14.
[4] III. 18. [5] III. 22.

thou art the companion of my youth?[1] And again: *Ye shall call me, my Father, and ye shall not go back from following me.*[2] It is reasonable to ask what is the explanation of this belief that a twofold relationship existed, whose reality would be finally vindicated and recognized.

Outward and visible signs are a source of strength to a man who is by nature retiring and emotional. God teaches men in the school which suits them best. He taught Jeremiah by outward signs and images. *Thus saith Jehovah to me: Go and buy thee a linen girdle, and place it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.*[3]

He did as he was told: and he learnt by means of the sign that *as the girdle cleaveth to a man's loins, so* Jehovah had *caused to cleave* unto Him *all the house of Israel and all the house of Judah:* and that as the girdle, when separated from the man, and hidden away in *a hole of the rock*, became *after many days* useless and *marred*, so the nation, when separated from its God, and going *after other gods to serve them*, was equally useless, and the pride thereof marred.[4]

If God had caused the nation to cleave to Him, it must be because He loved the nation. But if He loved it, how could He bear to see it marred?

[1] Jer. III. 4. [2] III. 19.
[3] XIII. 1. [4] XIII. 4, 6, 7, 10, 11.

Jeremiah himself could not: how then could Jehovah?

The answer to this question came in the form of a sign, simple indeed, and yet perhaps the most profound in the book. *Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear my words. So I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought his work on the wheels.* But like the girdle, the work is marred. *When the vessel that he wrought of clay was marred in the hands of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.*[1]

Suddenly the meaning of the sign flashed upon him. The potter on earth working with material clay is but a type and symbol of Some one in heaven working with human clay. By a sudden inspiration he sees the meaning of his nation's history. What is the nation save a thought of God working itself out in human clay? What are its troubles and judgments but the finger of God breaking and crushing the clay that resisted His work. *When the vessel . . . was marred . . . he made it again. Then the word of Jehovah came to me saying, Cannot I do with you as this potter, O house of Israel? saith Jehovah. Behold, as clay in the hands of the potter, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*[2] Jehovah can bear to see the nation

[1] Jer. XVIII. 2-4. [2] XVIII. 4-6.

marred, for Jehovah, like the potter, can *make it again*. He will not leave it alone. Each national calamity is a proof that the Potter is still at work, that He has not abandoned the nation, but is impressing His thought upon human wills, His image and character upon the people of Israel.

So Jeremiah learnt that his nation could not fail to realize the thought of God and to become at length a perfect expression of the purpose of its Maker ; for even when *marred*, it was yet *in the hands of the Potter*. The future of the nation did not depend upon its material prosperity. This might vanish ; its external glory might be overthrown, and the land be delivered into the hand of the enemy, but the nation, as it existed in the mind of God, would remain.

When Jeremiah had learnt this lesson for himself, he was able to deliver another to the people. He was so certain that God would eventually fashion the nation according to His own design, that he had sufficient faith to view without absolute despair the destruction of the present polity, the shattering in pieces of the whole constitution. This time he must not go, and quietly learn from the potter at work. He must buy an earthen bottle, which the potter had already made. *Thus said Jehovah: Go and buy a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the elders of the people and of the elders*

of the priests; and go forth into the valley of the son of Hinnom.[1]

Then he was told publicly to break the bottle, to destroy the result of the potter's work, for God too would not spare the work of His own hands. *Then thou shalt break the bottle before the eyes of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again.*[2]

Any religion that can solve the problems of Jeremiah's life must show what this firm belief in his nation's future means. It must explain his certainty that, though the outward existence of the city was doomed, though national life in that country was an impossibility, when it was founded upon falsehood and wrong; yet behind all was the thought of God, which should some day be realized; that the Heavenly Potter had as much power as the earthly, that He would at length work out His purpose, however often the nation might be marred in His hands. It must also tell us why he too, like Isaiah before him, was conscious that there should come from one particular family of that nation a king, who should bring the righteousness of heaven to earth, and unite in some measure God and man. Although Jeremiah knew that the kings of that

[1] Jer. XIX. 1, 2. [2] XIX. 10, 11.

time—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin—had failed, he ventures to speak of another king, who should come from the line of David: *Behold days are coming, saith Jehovah, that I will raise up to David a righteous Growth, and he shall reign as king and shall prosper, and shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In his days shall Judah be saved and Israel shall dwell securely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called—Jehovah is our Righteousness.*[1]

Isaiah looked forward to the birth of a child, who should be called *God is with us;* Jeremiah to the reign of a king, who should bring God's judgments to men, and who should bear the name of *Jehovah is our Righteousness.* Has the child been born or the king reigned, who could realize the hopes of either prophet?

The same prophecy is repeated later in the book in slightly different language: *In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Growth of righteousness, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell securely, and this is the name whereby* not he, the king, but *she,* the city, *shall be called—Jehovah is our Righteousness.*[2]

[1] Jer. XXIII. 5, 6. Contrast XXII. 11, 12, 18, 19, 28-30.
[2] XXXIII. 15, 16.

Here we see that the righteousness of the Growth from David's line was to be the means of the communication of Jehovah's righteousness to the whole city. The prophecy, repeated in this form, comes at the end of a group of discourses, which we must not overlook in estimating the evidential value of Jeremiah's work. These prophecies will be our last witness in the long line of evidence —the evidence of great aspirations and convictions, which demand alike an explanation and fulfilment of any religion which professes to be final. They are contained in the thirtieth and the two following chapters.

After Israel and Judah have passed through a terrible crisis, Jeremiah tells us that Jacob shall be saved[1] and the old worship and monarchy be restored. *They shall serve Jehovah their God and David their king whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, my servant Jacob, saith Jehovah, and be not thou dismayed, O Israel.*[2] He pictures this ruler as near both to man and to God. *And his prince shall be of himself, and his ruler shall come forth from his midst: and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is he that hath boldness to approach unto me? saith Jehovah. And ye shall be my people and I will be your God.*[3]

[1] Jer. xxx. 6, 7. [2] xxx. 9, 10. [3] xxx. 21, 22.

The nation and its God—heaven and earth—are united under this ruler : and the blessing of God extends not only to Judah but to Ephraim as well. *At that time, saith Jehovah, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.*[1]

But could Ephraim share in this blessing ? Were not his children lost and carried into captivity ? Doubtless the prophet himself felt the difficulty ; and as he dwelt upon it he became conscious that another besides himself was anxiously awaiting its solution. The mother of the tribe is looking on. The prophet could not think of her as dead. She is taking the deepest interest in the land, which used to be her home. In her grave near Ramah the mother is weeping for her sons, who are no more : *A voice is heard in Ramah—lamentation—bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her sons. She refuseth to be comforted for her sons, because they are not.*[2] But the answer comes : *Stay thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears . . . there is hope . . . thy children shall come again to their own border.*[3]

In a dream the prophet sees Judah back again in a land of peace and plenty : *And Judah and all the cities thereof shall dwell therein together; the husbandmen and they that go about with flocks.*[4]

[1] Jer. XXXI. 1. [2] XXXI. 15.
[3] XXXI. 16, 17. [4] XXXI. 24.

But he tells us of better things than peace and plenty. It may have been years before that the prophet had bidden the people listen to the *words of the covenant*[1] of Jehovah. He felt then, as he had felt since, how real that covenant was, and how nothing that the nation did could destroy it, because it was based not upon the good conduct of the people, but upon the relationship of Jehovah to His nation. But year after year had shown him how ineffectual such a bond was to keep the people from the worst of sins. Could there be no other, deeper covenant—a covenant which should give them power to be what they were, and to realize a relationship which still existed? Was there no power which could make them know God, which could work within their hearts, and do for them what they had failed to do for themselves? Here is the answer: *Behold days are coming, saith Jehovah, that I will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Jacob a new covenant; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took hold of their hand to bring them forth from the land of Egypt—that covenant of mine which they brake, though I was an husband unto them,*[2] *saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law*

[1] Jer. XI. 2. [2] Cf. III. 14.

in their inward parts, and upon their heart will I write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying: Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more.[1]

As we read such a promise as this, we are tempted to believe that it is too good to be true. Jeremiah was doubtless tempted in the same way. In his best moments he was certain that the nation would, one day, enjoy inward peace and the knowledge of Jehovah as well as outward security and plenty. But when the prophet *was shut up in the court of the guard, and the king of Babylon's army* was actually besieging Jerusalem,[2] we do not wonder that his faith almost failed him. He had been told to purchase his cousin's field in his native place, as a certain pledge that the land would not be deserted for ever, but that the time would come when *houses and fields and vineyards* should *yet again be bought in* the *land.*[3] He had obeyed the voice of conscience, and then began to doubt whether he had done wisely, whether God could bring the inhabitants back again, when once they were taken away. True, nothing was too hard for

[1] Jer. XXXI. 31-34. [2] XXXII. 2. [3] XXXII. 6-15.

God,[1] and yet this seemed such a marvel to accomplish. But God said: *Is anything too hard for me?*[2]

Jeremiah must not doubt. Material and spiritual prosperity should both be realized together: *I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell in security. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from after them, that I may do them good; and I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.*[3]

Any true religion must tell us why Jeremiah was assured that the day would come, when God would enter into such intimate relations with His people, that they should not merely long to know, but should actually know Him, and be able to keep His law. It must also show us why material prosperity is associated with the observance of God's covenant.

[1] Jer. XXXII. 17. [2] XXXII. 27. [3] XXXII. 37-40.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY.

We have now concluded our examination of some typical Hebrew prophetical works. We have searched for the deepest convictions of the authors of those books, and the result of our inquiry has been briefly as follows.

We have found that Amos never doubted that his nation possessed a corporate unity and a capacity for entering into intimate relations with a personal God. These facts were assumed by Amos and the other prophets whose works we have examined. They were confident that a great future was in store for their nation. The future was one of spiritual as well as material prosperity.

We have found that Hosea represented the connexion of Jehovah with Israel by the relationships of husband and wife, of father and son. This union exists even when ignored, denied, or misinterpreted by the nation. It will, however, be ultimately confessed and realized, when the nation has died and risen again. We have seen a man who, by the

troubles of his own life, was led to understand that man's life is, in some measure, a faint image of God's life.

The earlier prophecies of the book which bears Isaiah's name tell of the absolute holiness and omnipotence of the Supreme, and yet of His connexion with a particular nation, the people of Israel. The birth of a boy into the world will be a pledge if not a means of such a union of heaven and earth: a child is born, a son is given to the nation, who, though he bears the name of *God the Mighty One*, yet sits *upon the throne of David;* for the royal stock of Jesse shall yet put forth *a shoot*, in whose days a time of perfect peace and order shall arise. In the later prophecies of the same book we see before us the figure of Jehovah's Servant. Israel is called to be His Servant. Israel is His Servant; yet Israel as a whole does not recognize the fact, and most of the nation act as though they had never received a Divine call. But the relationship of master and servant—as that of husband and wife, or father and son—does not depend for its validity upon the fact of its recognition. It holds good, when least regarded. It too will at last be confessed and realized. But the nation must first die and be buried. The relationship when once ignored can only be entered into and realized again by suffering. Those who recognize it most, suffer

most. But it will be perfectly realized; for out of the barren, worthless national life this prophet also sees a shoot arise, who fulfils the call of the nation to be Jehovah's Servant, and whose voluntary sufferings for those who least understand their nature, work out the purpose of God.

Before we close the book we see another—if indeed it be another—figure arise, that of an unknown conqueror, who seems to be stained in the blood of his foes. His name is not given, but his words and works are connected with righteousness and salvation, if not with Jehovah Himself or the angel of His face.

Lastly, in the book of Jeremiah, we are again told of the nation's marriage with Jehovah and of His fatherhood also. We are shown the nation's connexion with God; and are taught that its sorrows are part of a discipline by which God's purpose is wrought in it. We see the perpetuity of the thought embodied in the nation outlasting its present imperfect expression; a growth from David's line bringing the righteousness of heaven to earth; a new covenant giving the people power to be what they are, and finding an outward expression in the material prosperity of the nation.

I shall attempt to prove in the second part of this essay that these thoughts, assumptions, convictions and yearnings, which found no adequate interpreta-

tion and fulfilment in the history of Israel before the time of our Lord, received not only a satisfactory interpretation, but also a complete fulfilment or pledge of fulfilment in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

SECOND PART.

CHAPTER I.

AMOS AND HOSEA INTERPRETED.

Amos, like the other prophets of whom we have spoken, was an intense patriot. His religion was bound up with patriotism. Does Christianity explain the rationality of patriotism, its connexion with religion, the peculiarly intense and noble nature of the highest Jewish patriotism? Christianity, as interpreted by St. Paul, regards corporate life as a more complete expression of Christ's life than the life of a number of isolated individuals can be. But an objection may be raised that though it is true that Christianity asserts the dignity of corporate life, yet it is the corporate life not of a nation but of a Church. Why then, it will be urged, do the prophets as they advance in spirituality and breadth of view passionately cling to the nation? Why do Jeremiah and the author of the last chapters of Isaiah not gradually forget the nation in a larger view of a universal society? For in the full

revelation of Christ the nation is merged in the Church.

Such an objection is interesting, but apparently arises from a misconception of the nature of the Church. National life never was intended to be merged in Church life, and has resisted such attempts. Church life, instead of throwing national life into the shade, throws light on its meaning, its destiny and its perpetuity. The nations walk in the light of the city of God, and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it.[1] The rationality and dignity of national hopes are vindicated by Christianity. Unity in variety is the life of God : unity in variety is the life of man, who is made in the image of God. There is one Church, but many nations. The Christian is the only true patriot. The more spiritual a man is, the more must he cling not only to the Church but to the nation, for Church and state are founded upon Christ Himself.

Christianity also explains the highest Jewish patriotism. Amos was sure that whilst God directed the history of other nations, He had a peculiar interest in Israel. Christianity shows us that God chose this particular nation to be the means of uniting heaven and earth and of regenerating the human race. For it was of Israel that Christ came *as concerning the flesh*.[2] Is it remarkable that the

[1] Rev. XXI. 24. Cf. 1 Tim. II. 1, 2. [2] Rom. IX. 5.

nation was not entirely unconscious of its high calling, that there was a unity asserting itself through the course of its history, and that patriotism in Israel was connected with the loftiest conceptions of God?

Again, Amos expected a Day of Jehovah and a fuller revelation of the nation's God. The Day seemed to dawn when Assyria manifested the judgments of God, when evil was seen to be evil and good seen to be good. Jehovah was revealed in the captivity and fall of the northern kingdom. But there were details in the prophet's description of the future, prophecies of a bringing again of *the captivity of my people Israel* and of a future spiritual and material prosperity, which was never worked out in the nation's history before the time of Christ. Have they been explained or fulfilled in Christ? We shall discuss this point later more in detail. Suffice it for the present to say that part at least of the belief in a Day of Jehovah was vindicated and realized by Christ's coming. The sun is what it is, when it is not seen: God is Who He is, when He is not seen. The sun eventually manifests its existence despite clouds or darkness in the light of common day. God eventually manifested Himself by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the light of the Day of Jehovah, when there came into this world of darkness One Who was *Light of Light*, One Who could say with truth, *He that hath seen me*

hath seen the Father; because in Him the fulness of the Godhead had its home.[1]

Hosea believed that relationships of father and son, of husband and wife, were types of a divine relationship. Christianity explains such a belief. It asserts that Fatherhood is found in the Deity itself, and that it is the source of all other fatherhood.[2] It gives a logical basis to the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. It reveals in that life an eternal Sonship, which explains the possibility of an eternal Fatherhood existing independently of creation. Since man was created in Christ Jesus, we can dimly see how man can be related to God as a son is to a Father. Moreover, God must not be regarded as the Father of individuals merely. His Fatherhood is more fully realized in His relation to a body of men than to an individual life, because a corporate society may be a completer expression of the life of His Son than individuals ever can be. Thus we see how Christianity casts light upon such words as those of Hosea: *When Israel was a boy, then I loved him.* Christianity shows us that Hosea was right in regarding the nation as a corporate unity, he was right in regarding God as a God of Love, and in believing that Jehovah specially loved Israel, as a father loves his son.

So also he was justified in believing that the

[1] St. John XIV. 9; Col. I. 19. [2] Eph. III. 14, 15.

nation was Jehovah's bride. Christ indeed loves individuals, but towards the Body in which His life is more fully reflected His love may be compared to that of a husband towards his wife.[1] Such a relationship is a fact already realized in the mind of God.[2] It was shown in a special manner in the nation which God loved above all nations. The Incarnation therefore throws light upon the story of Hosea's life. It shows the connexion of human with Divine life, and it affirms that love here is an image of love elsewhere.

Hosea felt that before the union of his nation with its God could be understood, the nation must suffer, must die and must rise again. *Let us*, said he, *know, let us follow on to know Jehovah.* But immediately before this he says : *After two days will he cause us to live, on the third day will he raise us up and we shall live before him.* Do not these words find a more complete fulfilment than ever before in the life, death and resurrection of Him Who was the ground of the nation's unity, Who came to reveal God and to teach men to know Him? Did they find any adequate explanation before the manifestation of Jesus Christ?

[1] Eph. v. 32. Cf. St. Matt. xxii. 2 ; xxv. 10.
[2] Rev. xix. 7 ; xxi. 9.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH INTERPRETED.

We have seen that Isaiah was a statesman. At two crises of his nation's history, he explained the political position to the reigning monarchs, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Like Hosea, he too believed that the sphere of life in which he moved and the relationships in which he stood towards his fellowmen, were connected with another Life and a diviner relationship. He saw that the authority of successive kings in Israel was the shadow of the higher authority of an eternal King—*the King Jehovah Sabaoth.* Jehovah was absolutely holy, and yet Isaiah felt that He had an interest in a nation which was not absolutely holy. Isaiah was certain that God had entered and would enter into close relations with man. How, we may ask, could a good God have any connexion with evil men? This problem underlies in some degree the first part and in a still greater degree the second part of the book of Isaiah; and to the Oriental mind at a later date

in many cases it formed an insurmountable difficulty to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. It will suffice here to point out that Christianity completes the revelation of Judaism that human nature is radically good [1] and that the evil principle is unconnected with the true humanity,[2] by showing how that evil principle has (as Jewish theology in part recognized [3]) a personality of its own.[4] That personality is alien to human nature; for man's nature is and always has been grounded upon Christ Himself,[5] Who manifests His presence even in those who least realize Him.[6] It was therefore possible for the good God to be connected with man; for the evil in man is not original, but an abnormal growth, alien to his true nature.

The problem of the union of a good God with an evil nation may have been one of the causes which led Isaiah to his belief in the preservation of a remnant of the nation. The stock shared in Jehovah's immortality. In the light of the Christian revelation we see the truth of such a doctrine. Israel as it appeared to men was not the same as Israel as seen by the eyes of God. The first was the whole nation, good and evil; the second was the Christ, Who though manifesting Himself in

[1] Gen. I. 27. [2] III. 1. [3] Cf. Job I. 11.
[4] St. Matt. IV. 1. [5] 1 Cor. III. 11.
[6] X. 4. St. John I. 9-11.

all was realized and trusted only by a few. The life of the stock was the life of Christ: the stock shared in God's life, because it was in Christ and Christ in it.

The hopes which centred round a child, who should bear the name Immanuel, were partially satisfied before the time of Christ. Are they realized in Him? It has been customary to believe that they were. But it may be objected: It is true that Jesus Christ fulfilled the significance of that most significant of names *God is with us*, in a way that no one else has done, but is it accurate to say that His birth more than seven hundred years after the date of the prophecy realized Isaiah's expectation of a child who should be born within a year, and who should be if not the instrument, at least the pledge of the deliverance of Judah from the hands of her enemies? I do not think that it is. If Isaiah was prophesying of an event which occurred seven hundred years later, he put it seven hundred years too soon. For however they may differ as to the precise force of Hebrew tenses in prophetical works, few unprejudiced readers can doubt that Isaiah believed that he was describing an event either actually present[1] or in the immediate future.[2]

But does not the objection rest upon a miscon-

[1] Isaiah VIII. 8, 10. VII. 14, 16.

ception of the true significance of the Incarnation? The Incarnation was not simply the birth of a fresh child into the world: it was the unveiling of One Who had lived in every child, Who had been in the world, though the world knew him not. When, therefore, the question is asked: Was Isaiah predicting a distant event, or was he telling of one which had a direct relation to his own time, and which would take place within the year? We answer: Undoubtedly he was telling of a child about to be born immediately, and who should be a pledge of God's deliverance from Assyria and of His presence in the midst of the nation. But because he had a deep insight into the affairs of his time, because he attempted accurately to describe a particular child, he was obliged to go deeper, and to describe some one else—not One Who only began to live in this world seven centuries later, but One Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Who manifests Himself in every child, Who manifested Himself in this child, born at a time when God appeared to have forgotten the race, Who was fully manifested in flesh as the Saviour of that land and of all lands, seeing that in His own Person He unites for ever humanity and Deity. Isaiah saw in part the revelation of Him Who is God and man, because he saw in part the meaning of one manifestation of that life, where

the human and the Divine are strangely blended—the life of a child. What he beheld was no mere future event separated by centuries from his own time, but he saw, however indistinctly, and rejoiced to see [1] One Who was then as always the ground of national existence, Who then as always united man to God and God to man, One Whom we know as Jesus Christ, and Who has told us that to receive a child in His name is to receive Himself.[2] Such is the light which Christianity throws upon this prophecy. It throws no less light upon that other prophecy,[3] delivered apparently about the same time, of a child whose *name is called Wonderful Counsellor, God the Mighty One, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*, who should bring light to the dwellers in Northern Palestine.

Hezekiah, probably a child at the time, did when he was king bring to that district the light of the knowledge of Jehovah :[4] He represented to men the wisdom, power, fatherhood and peace of God. But as we read the description of the child we feel that no earthly monarch could entirely make good his title to such dignity, that the prophet must, in describing the king upon the throne, have described Him Who made the king what he was, Whom we now know to be the Wisdom and the Power of

[1] Cf. St. John VIII. 56. [2] St. Matt. XVIII. 5. [3] Isaiah IX. 6.
[4] 2 Chron. XXX. See esp. verses 1, 10, 11.

God, Who said : *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*,[1] and Who, to use St. Paul's words, *is our peace*.[2] Such is the interpretation which Christianity gives of the meaning of those names. It shows that Isaiah was not concerned with shadowy ideals, but with a Person Who was living and present, and Who in the fulness of time was manifested as a Being at once human and Divine.

There is another prophecy in the first part of the book of Isaiah which we saw was fulfilled only in part by such a king as Hezekiah or Josiah. It speaks of the *shoot from the stock of Jesse*, upon whom *the spirit of Jehovah* should *rest*, in whose days *the wolf* should *lodge with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little boy* should *lead them*, whilst *the earth* should *have become full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea*.[3] Their reigns of peace and order satisfied in some measure the cravings of the prophet. Can they be entirely satisfied? Christianity reveals to us a shoot from the stock of Jesse, upon whom the Spirit of God descended in *bodily form:*[4] it shows us that the life of that shoot alone gave life to Hezekiah and Josiah. But how far has Christianity realized the latter part of this

[1] St. John XIV. 19.
[2] Eph. II. 14.
[3] Isaiah XI. 1, 2, 6, 9.
[4] St. Luke III. 22.

prophecy, which describes the material as well as spiritual prosperity of those over whom this king shall rule? Has the revelation of Him Who was the source of the life of every righteous monarch in Israel brought greater outward happiness to that nation?

To answer this question we must first determine what Isaiah meant by the *nation of Israel.* As we think of Israelites scattered throughout the civilized world, aliens and outcasts, we think of a nation cursed rather than blessed above all nations. But are we justified in calling them a nation? Would Isaiah have called them by that name? I do not think that he would. Such disconnected fragments are not a nation. Can a number of individuals, who deny and reject the One ground of national life, be called by such a name? But it may be said: Even if they are not the nation of Israel, yet they are that *remnant* which Isaiah saw would alone be left to represent the former nation. They exactly fulfil his conception of such a remnant. No, they do not fulfil it. Isaiah never used the name remnant of a number of disconnected individuals whether good or bad: he used it of a living whole, a *stock.* Such a stock was the proof of the unity and vitality of the nation, the assurance that God had not cast off the race. Israelites to-day, as in St. Paul's time, seem almost to form a proof to the

contrary, that God has cast it off, that it has no Divine ground of unity, no real vitality.

What then is the nation of Israel? The answer of the prophets is that all Israel is not Israel. The stock or remnant who recognize their source of life to be God, not merely Abraham, is the true Israel. This also is the answer of Christianity.[1] Those Jews who realized their position of dependence upon Him Who was then revealed as the Christ were shown to constitute the true Israel, and not those who asserted their rights as Abraham's children after the flesh.[2] This stock of the Jewish race may have been few in number, but they have done more important work in the world than any other body of men. The *remnant* of Israel has converted the Gentiles.[3] Through them the earth is becoming full of *the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.* They have also a glorious hope for the future. St. Paul, who himself belonged to the stock of Israel, has (if we interpret his words aright) told us how the very existence of such a stock is in itself a pledge of the future salvation of the whole nation : *so all Israel shall be saved.*[4]

[1] St. Paul in Rom. IX. 6-13 argues that the whole history of Israel is a proof that their national life is ultimately derived from God, not merely from Abraham.

[2] St. Luke III. 8. [3] Cf. Rom. XI. 1-12.

[4] XI. 26. Cf. 5-8 and 16-26 of the same chapter.

How far has Christianity fulfilled Isaiah's hopes for the future welfare of Israel? Isaiah expected the actual land of Israel to be the scene of the spiritual and material prosperity of the nation. Is not the salvation of which St. Paul speaks purely spiritual? Isaiah, on the contrary, expected a future in which outward and material blessings were joined with spiritual. The remnant which has been saved has not enjoyed the outward happiness for which Isaiah hoped; and when *all Israel shall be saved*, have we a right to suppose that they will enjoy such?

We have a right. The salvation which Christ brings is not merely spiritual. Christianity tells us that Isaiah was right in expecting material blessings to be joined with spiritual, for it asserts that the outward and visible is a sign of the spiritual and inward. As yet we do not see such a union realized: the good man is often oppressed and the bad man exalted, and the perfect Man is a Man of Sorrows. As yet even if all Israel were saved, all Israel might not be in the enjoyment of that outward prosperity which should correspond to an inward knowledge of God. As yet creation itself groans and travails, sharing in the fall of man. But Christianity gives us a sure and certain pledge in the life of Christ, who saved the body and soul of man, and who raised His own body, as well as in

the life of the Spirit within us, who bids us look for the redemption of our body,[1] and in the Sacraments of Christ's Church, that the day has in part come when the outward and visible can be the manifestation of the inward and unseen, and that the day will come when this material world will be the expression of a spiritual life. It tells us that God will realize on earth through all Israel, when saved and restored, His perfect glory. This glory shall be shown in the harmony not only of man with man, but of man with nature. By outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, it gives us a justification for connecting that which we are inclined to separate, but which Isaiah could not separate, the inward and the outward, the salvation of the body and the salvation of the soul, the restoration of nature and the restoration of man.[2] Salvation and restoration are only accomplished through suffering : but they have been in part, they shall be entirely accomplished. The time will come when the whole of life shall be sacramental, and the whole of Israel shall be saved. As a pledge of the first we have the Sacraments ; as a pledge of the second, the work which the remnant has effected. The Sacraments tell us that God intends this material world to be an expression of spiritual life : the work of the remnant tells us that part of His

[1] Rom. VIII. 23. [2] VIII. 22, 23.

purposes has been accomplished in Israel and that we may trust Him to continue the work which He has begun. Cannot we say, then, that Christianity, whilst it realizes in part the spiritual side of the hopes of Isaiah as regards his nation's future, gives also in the revelation of Jesus Christ, of His Spirit[1] and of His Sacraments, a pledge of the final realization of the whole range of the prophet's expectations?

[1] The groanings of nature (Rom. VIII. 22) and of man (VIII. 23) are answered by the groanings—too deep for words—of the Spirit (VIII. 26).

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND PART OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH INTERPRETED.

CHRISTIANITY shows the truth which lay beneath Isaiah's connexion of material prosperity and spiritual glory: what has it to say with regard to that teaching which is developed in the later prophecies of the book, that on the part of the Jewish race the path to glory lies through suffering?

The writer throughout appears to be depicting that which he could actually behold with his eyes. What he saw many men could not see; but he gives us the impression of one who saw something existing there and then, which was in part realized in the external world, but which afterwards would be more clearly manifested. He is not like one feeling his way in mists of fancy or lost in the vision of a distant future. He saw a nation, called to be Jehovah's servant, and yet not recognizing its position as such. Then he saw a nation within the nation which attempted to obey the call, but found the task beyond its strength, and complained to its Maker, *It is in vain that I have laboured.* Once

again he saw the nation quietly submit without a word to its intense suffering, he saw it misunderstood, dead, buried; he saw it satisfied after the travail of its soul, and exalted because it had accomplished the pleasure of Jehovah. But as we paraphrase his teaching, we feel that where we have said *it*, the prophet would have said *he;* for the prophet is painting no abstraction, but a living, human being, who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Does not Christianity alone explain his language? May not the prophet throughout be speaking of his own nation, and because he had a clear spiritual insight into the meaning of national life, have been compelled to recognize a solidarity in that life, and to catch glimpses at least of the one and only foundation of corporate life, which is a Divine and a Human Person—the Man Christ Jesus? He rightly spoke of all the nations as Jehovah's servant, for not only had the whole nation been called to serve, but to each individual of the nation Christ was giving light and manifesting His presence. He rightly spoke of the true part of that nation as Jehovah's servant, for that part alone claimed to be what all were, alone recognized their national position and yielded to the Christ in them. He told how the true part who tried to do their duty were complaining that all their labour was vain, because he saw around him

men fainting in the struggle with evil. Lastly, he saw that there was in the nation a root of national life, a root springing up *from a parched ground*, a Being who was in the nation and yet more than the nation, who suffered in Israel and yet suffered more patiently than Israel—One who, as we now know, was at last manifested as Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth. Christians have been taught to see that when they suffer, it is not they who suffer, but Christ in them, and that they are but filling up in their turn what is lacking in the sufferings of the Messiah.[1] This prophet dimly saw that as his people suffered, it was not they who suffered, but One in them, and that they were entering into the sorrow of another, an entirely righteous Being, at once human and more than human, whose sufferings worked out the salvation of all who claimed their connexion with Him.

He was despised and deserted of men, a man of pains and acquainted with sickness. Words true indeed of the nation, in so far as it recognized its calling and claimed to be God's minister: but far more true of the nation's Representative, whose life is spent in entering into the sufferings of the race, by whom He was deserted and despised.

But surely it is our sicknesses that he bore, and our pains that he carried. In any community some

[1] Col. I. 24.

members bear the sufferings and sins of the whole body. Those who love, have an almost deeper sense of disgrace and of misery, when the objects of their love sin or suffer, than if they themselves had done so. The mother of a family enters into and carries the shame and misfortunes of the whole family. But who entered into the sufferings of any portion of humanity so fully as the Son of Man, who loved and was *made sin for*[1] us men?

Through his stripes have we been healed. The sufferings of one member of a community may help to purify the whole body. But is not this because that member is sharing in and communicating one common life of sorrow and of sacrifice, which is beneath us all and binds us into one—the life of the crucified Saviour? Are not all such sacrifices alone effectual because they are grounded upon "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction"?

He was oppressed, yet . . . he opened not his mouth. Did Israel, or the true Israel within Israel, fully realize this picture of voluntary suffering? Did they not more often realize the other picture, when the Servant is heard to say: *It is in vain that I have laboured?* Was it fully realized before Him, who *when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not?*[2]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 21. [2] 1 Pet. II. 23.

He poured out his soul unto death. This is true in part of the nation, entirely true of Jesus Christ.

After the travail of his soul, he shall see, he shall be satisfied. The more spiritual in the nation could see the meaning of the discipline of suffering and captivity. He who endured the agony of Gethsemane and "descended into hell" sees farther. He sees the end of all. He sees and is satisfied. Thus Christianity shows how the prophet who wrote the account of Jehovah's suffering Servant was writing of a living Being, who was even then suffering in and for His nation, and who in the fullness of time was manifested as the one great sufferer in and for the world, as the bearer of the sins of that and of every other nation. Of whom did the prophet speak these words? Of himself? Yes. Of his nation? Yes. Of the elect in his nation? Yes. Of some other? Yes: of Him who was in himself, in his nation and in the elect of his nation, of Jesus Christ our Lord.

What of that other picture of him who is said to have given his back to the smiters and his cheeks *to those who plucked out the hair?* Does not Christ realize this? Did not He also alone fulfil the description of one anointed *to bring good tidings to the afflicted?* The nation and the prophet never entirely fulfilled it. He too interprets the history of that conqueror, who had come from Edom, who

refused his name but would only say : *I am one that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.* For Christianity tells us that all earthly warriors, who have done their duty and fought for the right, who have

> " for " their " country felt alone,
> And prized her blood beyond " their " own " :

have fought in Christ's strength, that as they fought, it was not they who fought, but He in them. No wonder then that the man who would describe their battles and their victories must perforce tell of the battles and victories of One greater than they. Behind the soldier on earth, behind the noise and tumult of battle in this world, there are other soldiers and another battle. *I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat thereon . . . was clothed in a raiment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven were following him.*[1]

Lastly, Christianity satisfied the longing of the prophet, *Oh that thou hadst rent the heavens and come down*, by telling us that ever since the world was, heaven and earth were united by God the Son, and by affirming that in the Incarnation this union of God and man has been manifested as an eternal fact. The Son came down from Heaven for that purpose, and still lives and moves upon this earth in His Body the Church.

[1] Rev. XIX. 11, 13, 14.

CHAPTER IV.

INTERPRETATION OF JEREMIAH. CONCLUSION.

JEREMIAH loved his nation. Christianity explains and justifies the growth of such a love. It explains it; for it shows how it is derived from, and is a copy of a diviner Love—the Love of God. It justifies it; for it shows how a nation is a corporate unity, sharing in the life of Christ.

Jeremiah was taught by signs the meaning of the history of Judah. The potter at work with material clay taught him how God was at work with human clay, forming the nation in His own image. *Cannot I do with you as this potter, O house of Israel?* Jeremiah must have recognized the force of the argument. He must have felt that if a potter on earth could ultimately succeed in impressing the thought in his mind upon the clay in his hand, God in heaven must be able to mould human clay into the design which He had eternally purposed. Yet at a later period we find him almost giving up in despair. He had himself made little impression upon the nation. Can God work out

His purposes? Will the clay submit to be moulded? *Thou didst entice me, Jehovah*, he cries out in agony after the insults of Pashhur. *Thou didst entice me, Jehovah, and I was enticed: Thou wast stronger than I and didst prevail.*[1] The truth is that the argument is not so simple as it appears at first sight. The potter was working with lifeless clay, which is easy to mould. God was working with human wills, which omnipotence itself cannot by the exercise of mere power make holy. A will cannot be forced. Could God do with the nation what the potter was doing with the clay?

Again, even if God eventually worked out His purpose, and Israel some day expressed His thought and character, what of those numberless fragments of clay, which had refused and were refusing to be moulded? True, they were so marred and crushed by misfortune that some of them (God knows how many or how few) might, by the discipline of suffering, learn the meaning of pain and willingly submit to the moulding of the finger of God. But what of the rest, of the majority, who scorned his message, and who died in their sins? If the nation ever was moulded, must not these be included? There must be some hope and some message even for these. Such thoughts must, I conceive, have been working in the prophet's mind,

[1] Jer. xx. 1, 2, 7.

and have been preying upon him when he was thrown into *the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin;* or when he cried out: *Cursed is the day wherein I was born; the day wherein my mother bare me—let it not be blessed.*[1] Whether or not Jeremiah was troubled by these questions, they are problems which a study of his sign suggests. Light is cast upon their solution by Christianity.

Christianity says: It is true no exercise of mere power can make a will good. It cannot be moulded as easily as clay. But there is One who is Man, and yet more than Man, who took upon Him this human clay, who entirely submitted it to the hands of its Maker, allowing Him day by day, to make it an image of His own perfect character and will. And what Jesus of Nazareth has done, He is doing in and for all who own Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Suffering may mar a man or a nation, and never bring them nearer to God. The best discipline seems often to fail upon earth. But Christianity tells us that God has more worlds than one. What is begun here may be continued elsewhere. As Christ rose so we shall rise. The nation which has never been moulded here may be moulded elsewhere. Even the fragments of that nation who never completely recognized their privileges

[1] Jer. xx. 2, 14.

on earth may recognize them more fully in another world.

> In His vast world above,
> A world of broader love,
> God hath some grand employment for His son.

Even in speaking of those who have entirely scorned their privileges here, it says: "Beware how you limit the purposes of God. Mere power must fail, but may not love prove stronger than hatred? For the Cross says that light is stronger than darkness, love than all that opposes it."

Jeremiah speaks also of one named *Jehovah is our Righteousness*, of a *righteous Growth* whom Jehovah would *raise up to David*. He seems to say that his righteousness should be the means of communicating Jehovah's righteousness to the whole city. Such a conception was fulfilled in Him Who came from David's line, and brought God's righteousness down, not only to that city or nation, but to all mankind who believe in Him.

Finally, Christianity interprets the group of prophecies found in the thirtieth and following chapters: *Ye shall be my people and I will be your God. . . . At that time, saith Jehovah, I will be the God of all the families of Israel.*[1] This prophecy has been already fulfilled in part by Jesus Christ, Who united man to God and God to man. The pledge

[1] Jer. xxx. 22; xxxi. 1.

of its entire fulfilment was given by Him also, in that He opened the gate of immortality to men, and showed them that life here was but the prelude to an eternity of life in which man should know as he is known.[1]

A voice is heard in Ramah . . . Rachel weeping for her sons. Rachel was alive. She lived in Christ, Who is the source of all life; may she not, therefore, have taken interest in the affairs of that humanity with which He has identified Himself, and possibly even in the affairs of that part of humanity to which on earth she had been bound by the ties of a mother?

Stay thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears . . . there is hope . . . thy children shall come again to their own border. There is more hope than Jeremiah thought of; for there is a Saviour Who has died for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He might gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.[2]

And Judah and all the cities shall dwell . . . together; the husbandmen and they that go about with flocks. We have a pledge of the final union of outward blessings and inward grace in every Sacrament that is administered.

Behold, days are coming, saith Jehovah, that I

[1] 1 Cor. XIII. 12. [2] St. John XI. 51, 52.

will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Jacob a new covenant—a covenant giving them power to be what they were, the bride of Jehovah. The covenant has been made, the power has been given, the Spirit has descended; and though the covenant is often broken, the power slighted, the Spirit quenched; the covenant, the power, the Spirit are with us and in us, and as many as will may realize them. For *the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.*[1]

When we doubt, as Jeremiah did, whether all that God says is not too good to be true; when we ask whether the outward will ever be the sign of the inward, whether corporate life can be realized in this world, God's answer to our doubts comes back the same, only with ten thousand times more power. The Incarnation, the Church, the Sacraments, the revelation that God is Love, give new force to the question, which Jehovah asked of Jeremiah: *Is anything too hard for me?*

We have shown that Christianity has satisfied or given a pledge of the ultimate satisfaction of the deepest wants of the Hebrew prophets whose writings we have considered. It has accounted for the origin and growth of such wants. We might complete our argument by proving that no other religion has done the same. We might survey the

[1] Rev. xxii. 17.

religious systems of the world, which offer any explanations or fulfilments, and demonstrate how inadequate they were to meet the needs of the case. But such a course would not be free from difficulty. It would be well-nigh impossible to assure ourselves that every explanation or fulfilment in all important religious systems had been discovered, or that those which had been detected had received impartial consideration. I do not propose to attempt such a task. I am content to leave the solution which Christianity offers before my readers, that they may judge whether any religion save that of Jesus Christ is likely to satisfy all the conditions of the case. Until another religion is shown to exist which can explain and reconcile in the prophets' writings the sternness of their monotheism and the tenderness of their "theanthropism," the sense of their nation's sin and their nation's destiny; the claims of Christianity to be God's last word to the world have a right to be listened to with singular reverence.

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